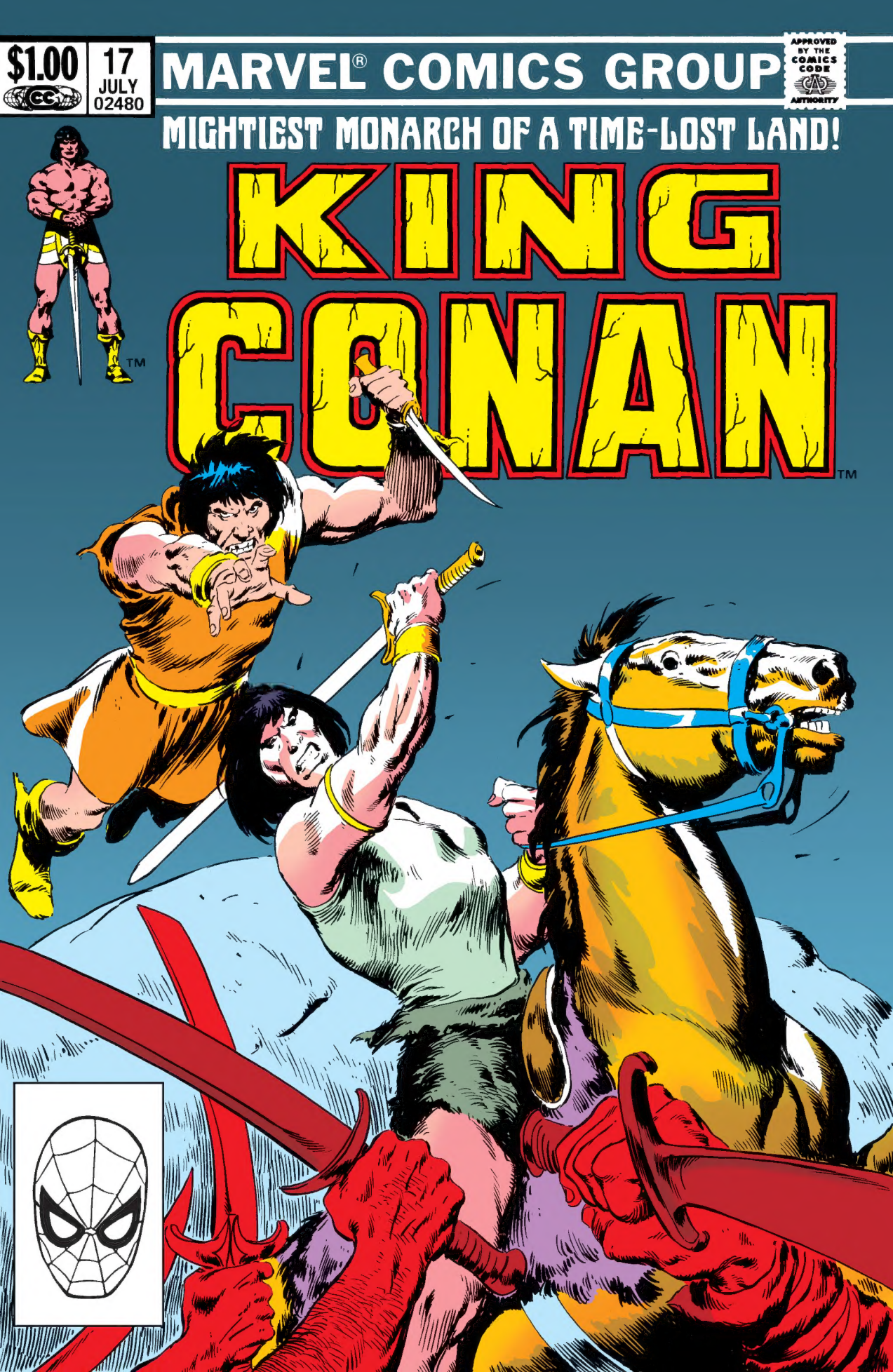
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MARVEL® COMICS GROUP
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MIGHTIEST MONARCH OF A TIME-LOST LAND!
KING CONAN™

A TYRANT IN AMBER
KING NEBUHAN OF TEL-AMMON, A CITY-STATE IN SHEM, IS FAR FROM A BELOVED MONARCH.
LITTLE WONDER, FOR HIS COLDLY HANDSOME FEATURES REVEAL THAT THE KING IS POSSESSED OF AN UNDERLYING VICIOUSNESS OF SPIRIT.
AS IN THE CASE OF ALL TYRANTS, THERE HAVE BEEN ATTEMPTS UPON HIS LIFE, BUT THUS FAR ALL HAVE FAILED.
PERHAPS TODAY--
ALAN ZELENETZ SCRIPTER
JOHN BUSCEMA PENCILER
RUDY NEBRES INKER
JOE ROSEN LETTERER
GEORGE ROUSSOS COLORIST
JIM OWSLEY EDITOR
JIM SHOOTER IN CHIEF

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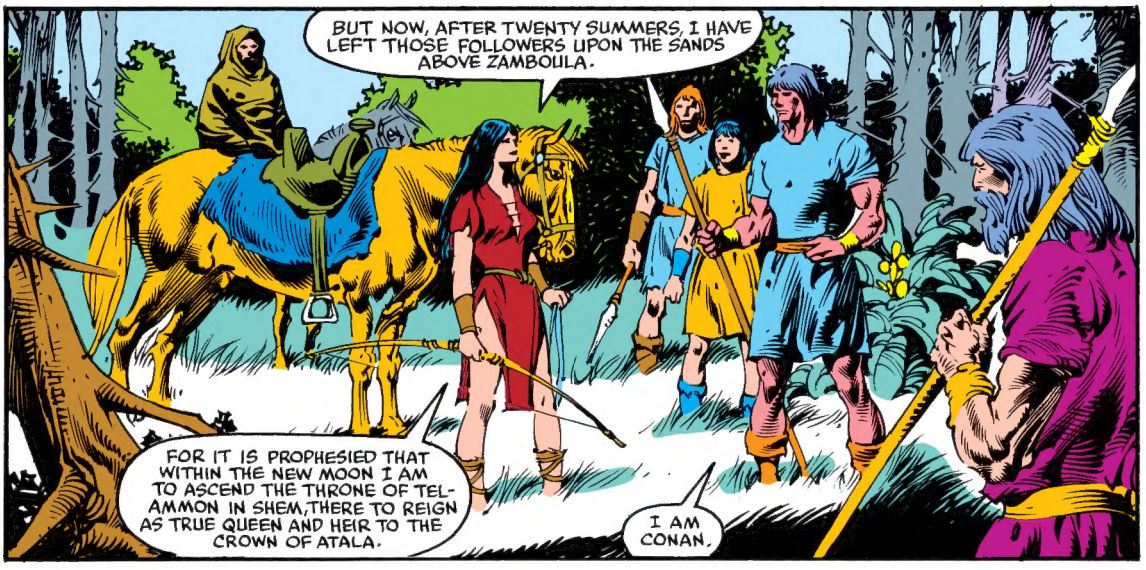
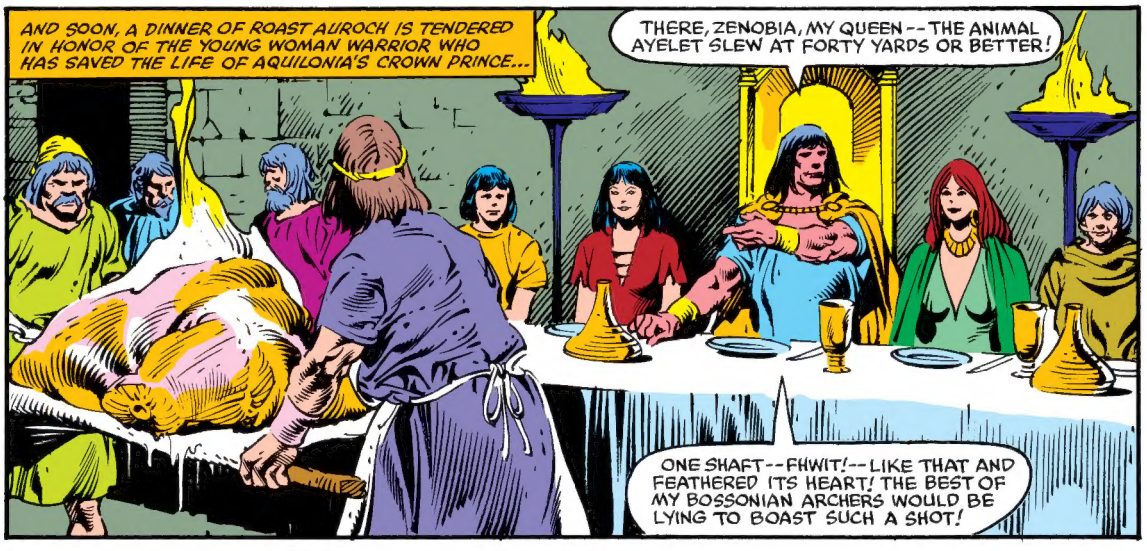
SAY SOMETHING OR THEY'LL HANG US FOR DISRESPECT...
LONG LIVE THE KING.
AND THEN--
DEATH TO ALL TYRANTS!
DIE, NEBUHAN!
WHAT!? MY BLADE SANK TO ITS HILT BUT DREW NO BLOOD!
YOU TREACHEROUS DOG!
NO, HOLD YOUR PIKE!
RATHER TRAMPLE HIM ALIVE.
HNNNH!
AIEE

IT'S... IT'S IMPOSSIBLE.
THE KING MUST INDEED LEAD A DEMON'S BEWITCHED LIFE!
ISHTAR, WILL THIS TYRANT LIVE FOREVER?
GUARDS, LIFT THE BODY OF THE WOULD-BE-ASSASSIN. OUR CROCODILE WILL ENJOY HIM. NOW MOVE ON.
LEAGUES NORTH, IN TARANTIA, CAPITAL OF AQUILONIA, KING CONAN AND PRINCE CONN LEAD A ROYAL HUNT...
FATHER, THE AUROCH'S HARRIED ENOUGH.
LOOK, WE'VE BACKED HIM AGAINST A COPSE OF TREES. I'LL TAKE HIM--
WHOA, CONN--
I CAN DO IT, FATHER. I'LL STRIKE THE DEATHBLOW--

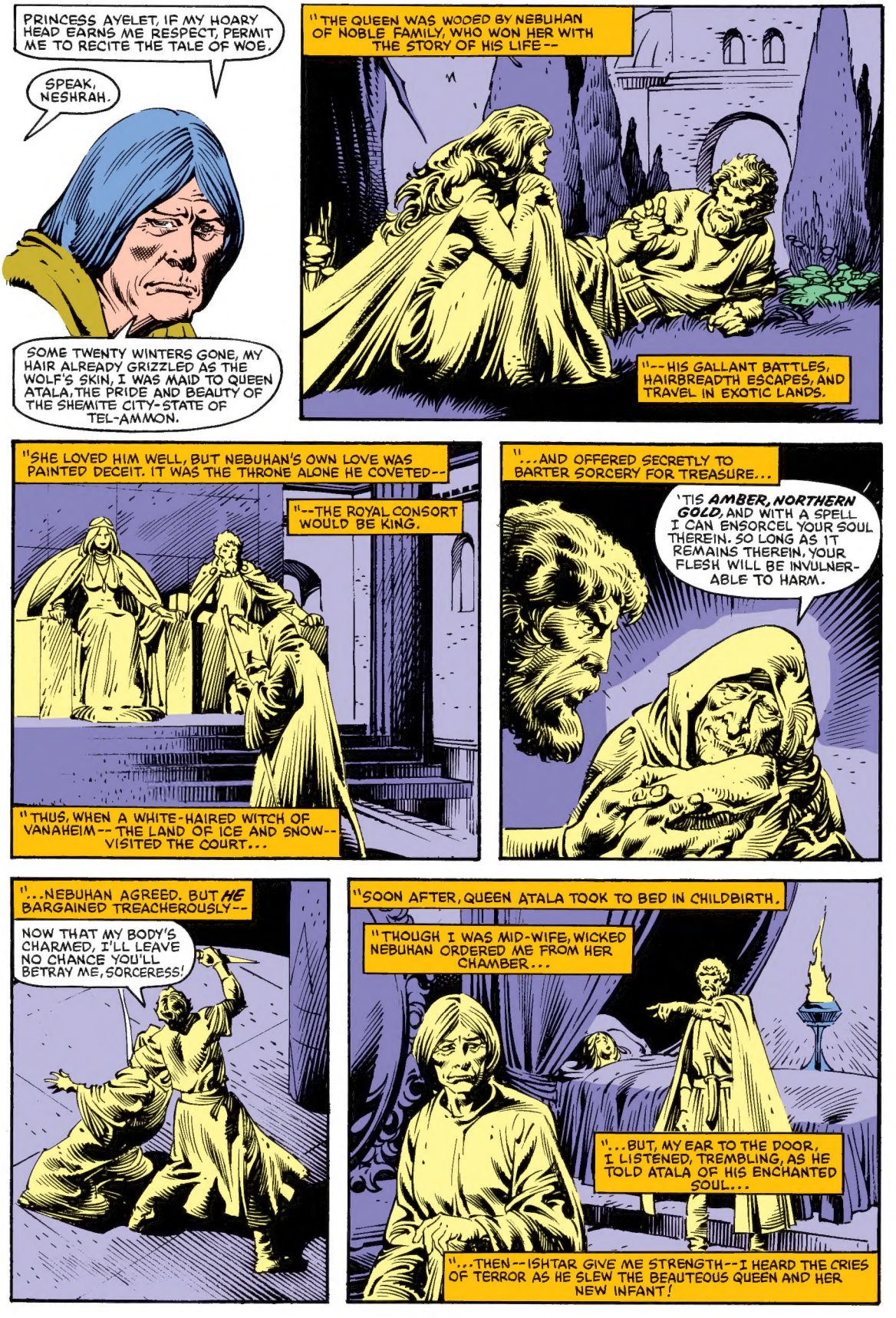
CONN, YOU IMPETUOUS WHELP, WAIT FOR THE REST OF US TO CLOSE IN!
THERE!
OH! I'VE ONLY WOUNDED HIM--
TATHUP TATHUP TATHUP
HE'S MAD --NO!
I'M COMING, BOY!
TATHUD
BY CROM, WHAT--?
THERE'S AN ARROW DIRECTLY TO THE HEART, FATHER! BUT WHO--?
WHO INDEED, PRINCELING...?
I AM AYELET. MY FOLLOWERS HAVE CALLED ME SHE-LION AND QUEEN OF THE DESERT.

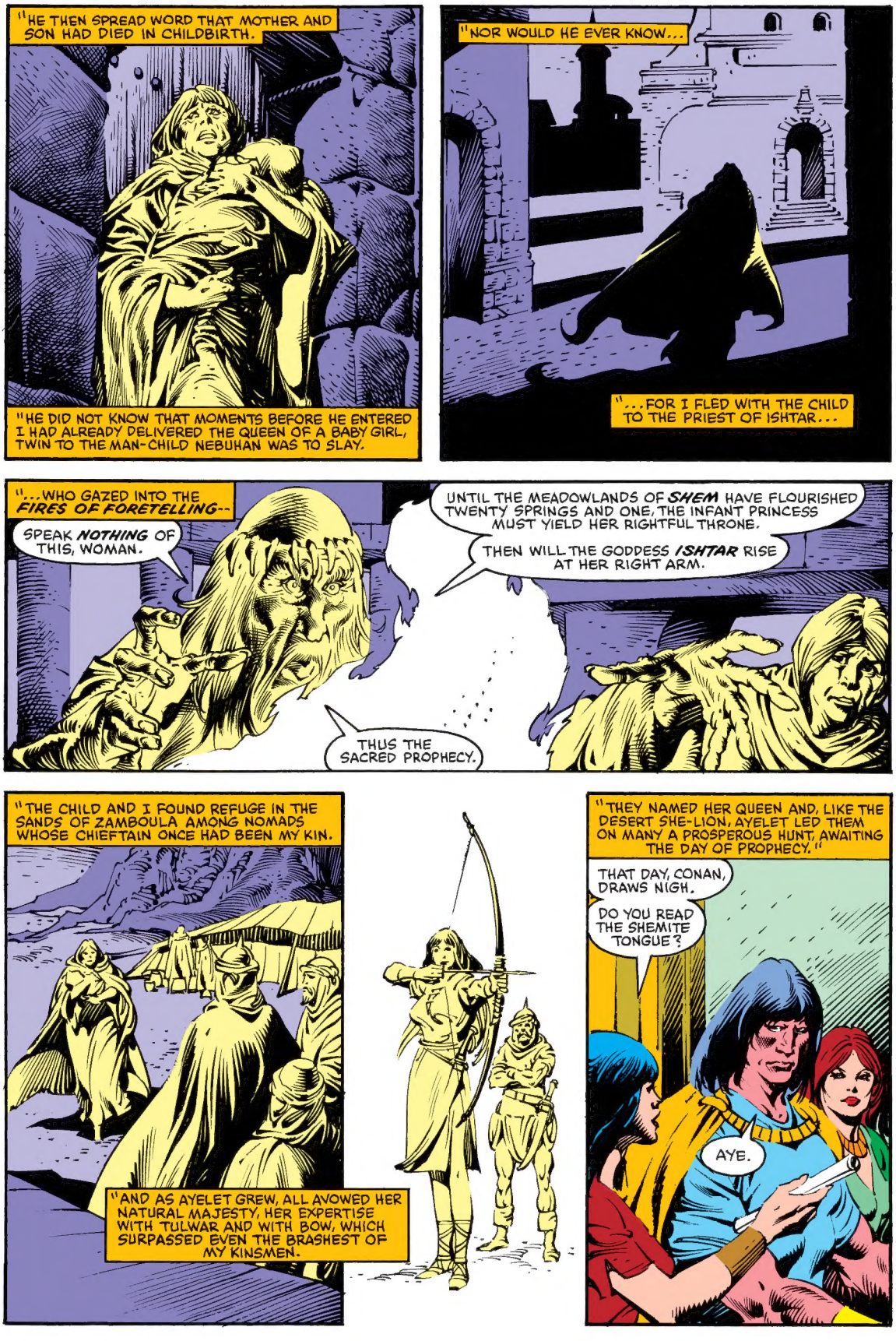

BUT NOW, AFTER TWENTY SUMMERS, I HAVE LEFT THOSE FOLLOWERS UPON THE SANDS ABOVE ZAMBOULA.
FOR IT IS PROPHESIED THAT WITHIN THE NEW MOON I AM TO ASCEND THE THRONE OF TEL-AMMON IN SHEM, THERE TO REIGN AS TRUE QUEEN AND HEIR TO THE CROWN OF ATALA.
I AM CONAN.


AND SOON, A DINNER OF ROAST AUROCH IS TENDERED IN HONOR OF THE YOUNG WOMAN WARRIOR WHO HAS SAVED THE LIFE OF AQUILONIA'S CROWN PRINCE...
THERE, ZENOBIA, MY QUEEN--THE ANIMAL AYELET SLEW AT FORTY YARDS OR BETTER!
ONE SHAFT--FHWIT!--LIKE THAT AND FEATHERED ITS HEART! THE BEST OF MY BOSSONIAN ARCHERS WOULD BE LYING TO BOAST SUCH A SHOT!

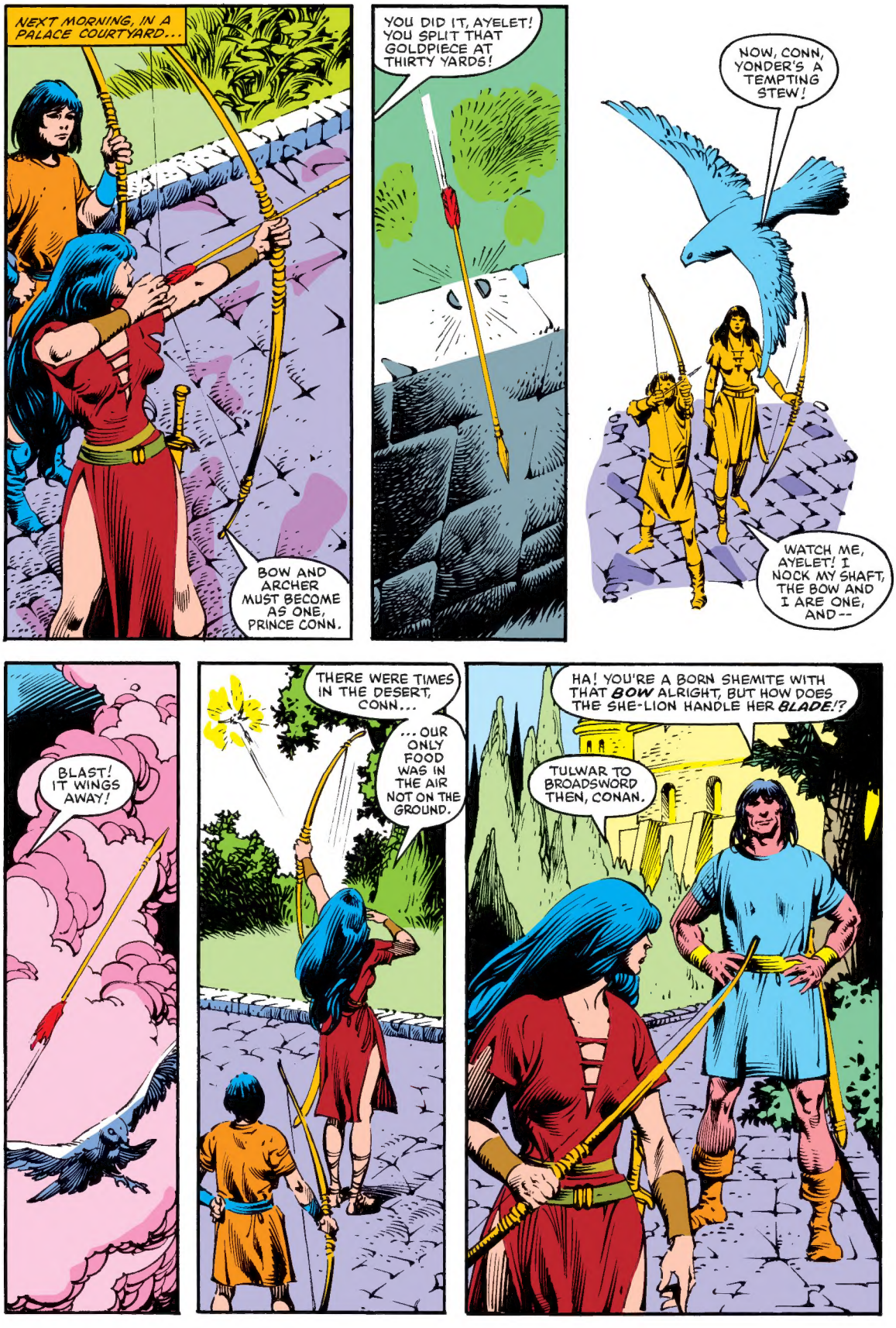
I ADD MY WARMEST THANKS TO THOSE OF MY HUSBAND FOR YOUR PROTECTION AND DELIVERANCE OF OUR SON.
IT WOULD BE A GRAVE SHAME IF AUGHT HARM BEFELL SO HANDSOME A YOUNG MAN.

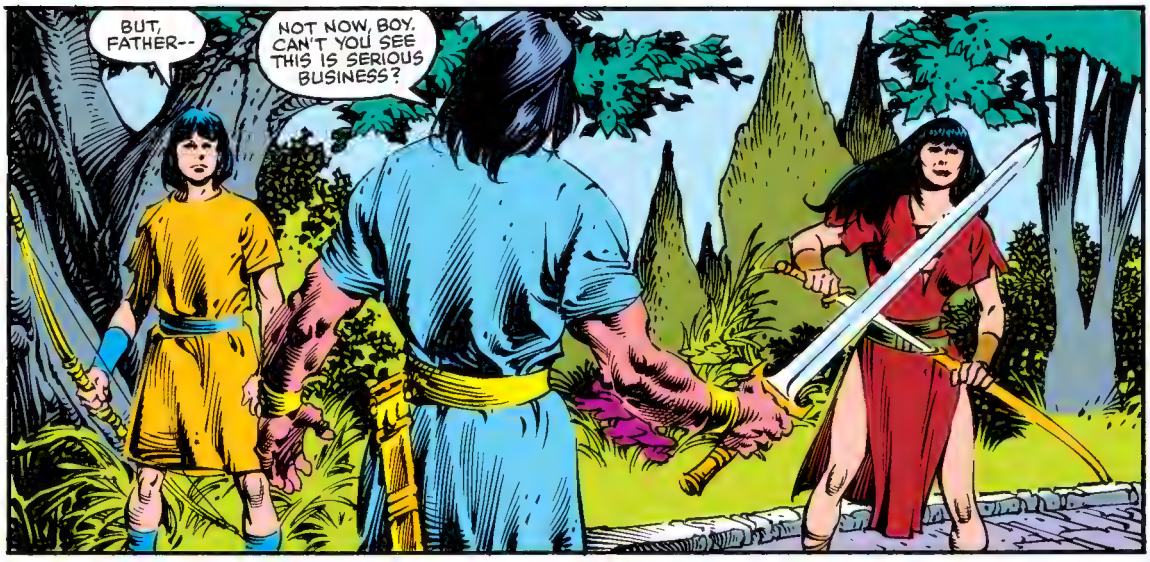
NOW, AYELET, YOU SAID ON OUR RETURN TO THE PALACE THAT YOU SOUGHT THE AID OF AQUILONIA?
NOT AQUILONIA, CONAN, ONLY ITS KING.


PRINCESS AYELET, IF MY HOARY HEAD EARNS ME RESPECT, PERMIT ME TO RECITE THE TALE OF WOE.
SPEAK, NESHRAH.
SOME TWENTY WINTERS GONE, MY HAIR ALREADY GRIZZLED AS THE WOLF'S SKIN, I WAS MAID TO QUEEN ATALA, THE PRIDE AND BEAUTY OF THE SHEMITE CITY-STATE OF TEL-AMMON.
"THE QUEEN WAS WOOED BY NEBUHAN OF NOBLE FAMILY, WHO WON HER WITH THE STORY OF HIS LIFE--
"--HIS GALLANT BATTLES, HAIRBREADTH ESCAPES, AND TRAVEL IN EXOTIC LANDS.
"SHE LOVED HIM WELL, BUT NEBUHAN'S OWN LOVE WAS PAINTED DECEIT. IT WAS THE THRONE ALONE HE COVETED--
"--THE ROYAL CONSORT WOULD BE KING.
"THUS, WHEN A WHITE-HAIRED WITCH OF VANAHEIM -- THE LAND OF ICE AND SNOW -- VISITED THE COURT...
"...AND OFFERED SECRETLY TO BARTER SORCERY FOR TREASURE...
'TIS AMBER, NORTHERN GOLD, AND WITH A SPELL I CAN ENSORCEL YOUR SOUL THEREIN. SO LONG AS IT REMAINS THEREIN, YOUR FLESH WILL BE INVULNERABLE TO HARM.
"...NEBUHAN AGREED. BUT HE BARGAINED TREACHEROUSLY--
NOW THAT MY BODY'S CHARMED, I'LL LEAVE NO CHANCE YOU'LL BETRAY ME, SORCERESS!
"SOON AFTER, QUEEN ATALA TOOK TO BED IN CHILDBIRTH.
"THOUGH I WAS MID-WIFE, WICKED NEBUHAN ORDERED ME FROM HER CHAMBER...
"...BUT, MY EAR TO THE DOOR, I LISTENED, TREMBLING, AS HE TOLD ATALA OF HIS ENCHANTED SOUL...
"...THEN--ISHTAR GIVE ME STRENGTH--I HEARD THE CRIES OF TERROR AS HE SLEW THE BEAUTEOUS QUEEN AND HER NEW INFANT!


"HE THEN SPREAD WORD THAT MOTHER AND SON HAD DIED IN CHILDBIRTH.
"HE DID NOT KNOW THAT MOMENTS BEFORE HE ENTERED I HAD ALREADY DELIVERED THE QUEEN OF A BABY GIRL, TWIN TO THE MAN-CHILD NEBUHAN WAS TO SLAY.
"NOR WOULD HE EVER KNOW...
"...FOR I FLED WITH THE CHILD TO THE PRIEST OF ISHTAR...
"...WHO GAZED INTO THE *FIRES OF FORETELLING*--
SPEAK *NOTHING* OF THIS, WOMAN.
UNTIL THE MEADOWLANDS OF *SHEM* HAVE FLOURISHED TWENTY SPRINGS AND ONE, THE INFANT PRINCESS MUST YIELD HER RIGHTFUL THRONE.
THEN WILL THE GODDESS *ISHTAR* RISE AT HER RIGHT ARM.
THUS THE SACRED PROPHECY.
"THE CHILD AND I FOUND REFUGE IN THE SANDS OF ZAMBOULA AMONG NOMADS WHOSE CHIEFTAIN ONCE HAD BEEN MY KIN.
"AND AS AYELET GREW, ALL AVOWED HER NATURAL MAJESTY, HER EXPERTISE WITH TULWAR AND WITH BOW, WHICH SURPASSED EVEN THE BRASHEST OF MY KINSMEN.
"THEY NAMED HER QUEEN AND, LIKE THE DESERT SHE-LION, AYELET LED THEM ON MANY A PROSPEROUS HUNT, AWAITING THE DAY OF PROPHECY."
THAT DAY, CONAN, DRAWS NIGH.
DO YOU READ THE SHEMITE TONGUE?
AYE.

"I YERAHMAEL HIGH PRIEST INSCRIBE THESE HOLY WORDS-- IN THE TWENTY-FIRST YEAR OF BLOOD, ON THE DAY OF ANNIVERSARY...
...THE MORNING-STAR WILL RISE AT MIDNIGHT, THE LIONESS WILL CONQUER TEL-AMMON."
WHAT DOES IT MEAN?
MY NAME, AYELET, SIGNIFIES 'THE MORNING STAR.' AND LIKE MY MOTHER I BEAR THE BIRTHMARK OF THE LIONESS UPON MY ARM.
AND WHAT WOULD YOU OF MY HUSBAND?
THE ENCHANTED AMBER WHICH HOLDS THE TYRANT'S SOUL IS HIDDEN IN A TOPLESS TOWER OF NEBUHAN'S OWN DESIGN, THE TOWER OF BET-SHAID.
THE AMBER MUST BE GOTTEN AND CAST INTO FIRE. ONLY THEN MAY THE DEATHS OF MY MOTHER AND BROTHER BE AVENGED AND MY PEOPLE BE FREED OF HIS TYRANNY.
WHEREVER I HAVE TRAVELED, MEN SPEAK THE NAME OF CONAN. IF THERE IS ANY WHO CAN SCALE BET-SHAID AND STEAL THE TYRANT'S SOUL IT IS YOUR HUSBAND.
FOR HIS AID, AQUILONIA WILL HAVE AN EVERLASTING ALLY IN THE HEART OF SHEM.
PERHAPS, PRINCESS, WE COULD SEND TROOPS, BUT AS FOR THE KING HIMSELF, ONCE MORE TO LEAVE HIS LAND--
AS FOR THE KING, HE'LL MAKE REPLY WITHIN THE NEXT FEW DAYS.
PRINCESS, YOU ARE WELCOME TO RESIDE WITHIN THE ROYAL PALACE 'TIL THAT TIME.
IT DOES ME HONOR TO ACCEPT YOUR HOSPITALITY.

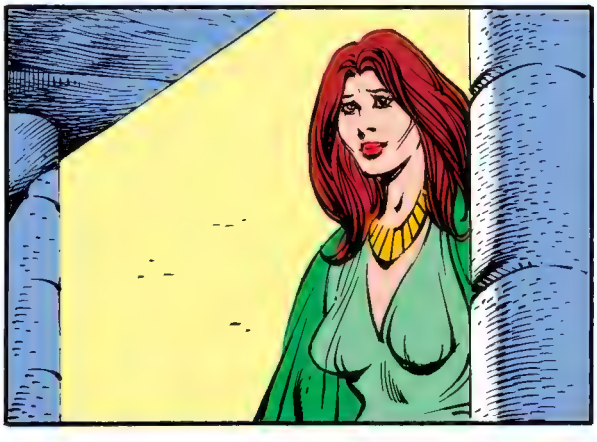

NEXT MORNING, IN A PALACE COURTYARD...
BOW AND ARCHER MUST BECOME AS ONE, PRINCE CONN.
YOU DID IT, AYELET! YOU SPLIT THAT GOLDPIECE AT THIRTY YARDS!
NOW, CONN, YONDER'S A TEMPTING STEW!
WATCH ME, AYELET! I NOCK MY SHAFT, THE BOW AND I ARE ONE, AND--
BLAST! IT WINGS AWAY!
THERE WERE TIMES IN THE DESERT, CONN...
...OUR ONLY FOOD WAS IN THE AIR NOT ON THE GROUND.
HA! YOU'RE A BORN SHEMITE WITH THAT BOW ALRIGHT, BUT HOW DOES THE SHE-LION HANDLE HER BLADE!?
TULWAR TO BROADSWORD THEN, CONAN.


BUT, FATHER--
NOT NOW, BOY. CAN'T YOU SEE THIS IS SERIOUS BUSINESS?

THAK

HO, YOU THRUST AND PARRY DEFTLY, PRINCESS.
THAK
A QUEEN OUGHT NOT RELY UPON THE ROYAL GUARD FOR HER SOLE DEFENSE.

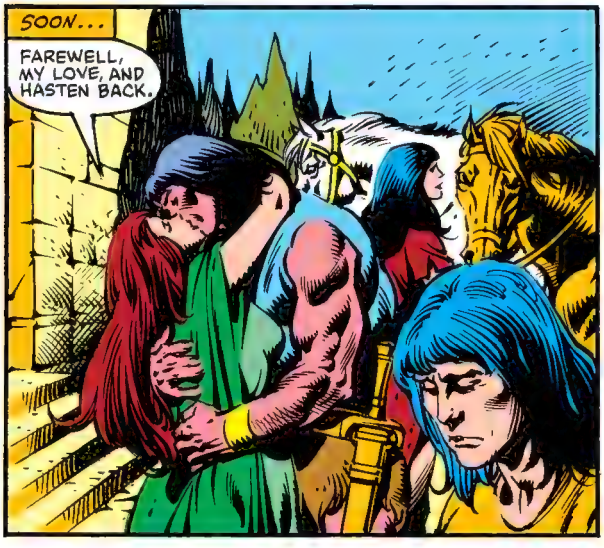
WHY SO DOWNCAST, CONN? WHERE DO YOU COME FROM?
THE COURTYARD, MOTHER. NOW, GOOD DAY.



YOU'VE NEAR WINDED ME, AYELET!
HA HA
AND THAT EVENING, THE ROYAL GARDENS...
YOU'LL NOT GO WITH HER, CONAN, WILL YOU? LEAVE US AGAIN?
I MAY HAVE BEEN BORN A BARBARIAN OF CIMMERIA, ZENOBIA, BUT-- CROM!--
YOU'VE CIVILIZED ME ENOUGH TO READ THE NUANCE IN YOUR VOICE. YOU'RE JEALOUS, MY LOVE.
YOU RIDE FROM AQUILONIA SO OFTEN THE PEOPLE WILL BEGIN TO GRUMBLE THAT YOU CARE LEAST FOR YOUR OWN SUBJECTS.
AYELET CAN GET OTHERS WHO WILL ATTEMPT THE TOWER--
ZENOBIA, IN MY YOUTH THERE WAS NO HEIGHT I COULD NOT SCALE. I REMEMBER THE TOWER OF THE ELEPHANT--
--LIKE GLASS ITS POLISHED SIDES, CROM! DO YOU THINK I CAN STILL DO IT?
AYELET'S RIGHT. EVERYWHERE MEN SPEAK OF CONAN'S PROWESS. WELL, I'LL ADD ANOTHER DEED TO THEIR STORE OF LEGENDS!
LET THEM SEE CIVILIZATION'S NOT SOFTENED THE OLD BOY FROM CIMMERIA. THE KINGDOM'S AT PEACE--
YES, CONAN. THE KINGDOM IS AT PEACE.
BUT IS IT SO DIFFICULT FOR YOU TO BE AT PEACE AS WELL? OR MUST THE SAVAGE EVER RISE IN YOUR BREAST TO TAKE YOU WANDERING FROM ME?

THAT NEXT DAY...
AYELET, I'VE ORDERED WHITE TEMPEST TO BE SADDLED.
THEN YOU'LL COME! WE'LL LEAVE AT ONCE. MY THANKS, CONAN.

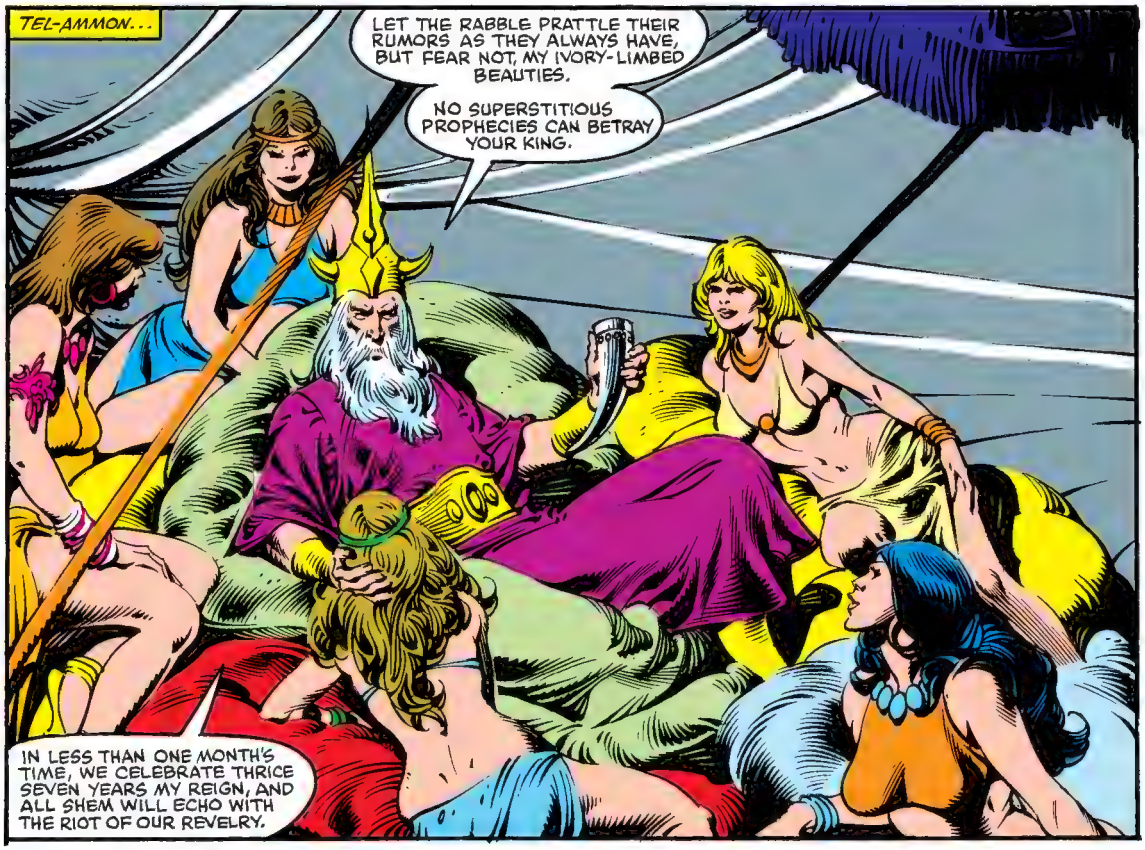
AND WHEN THE MOON'S ONCE MORE FULL, LION AND LIONESS WILL PROWL THE PALACE OF TEL-AMMON, EH?


SOON...
FAREWELL, MY LOVE, AND HASTEN BACK.

STILL, I DON'T SEE WHY I CANNOT COME TO AID AYELET AS WELL, SIRE!
AND LEAVE YOUR MOTHER WITHOUT HER RIGHT SWORD ARM? NO, SON, I VOUCH YOU'LL NOT BE IDLE HERE AT HOME.

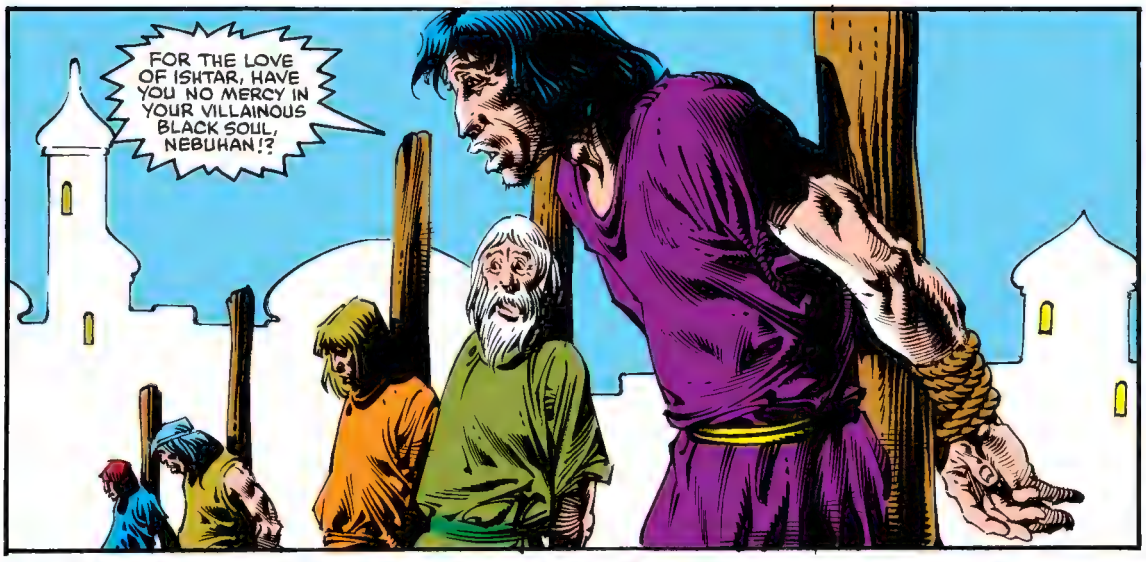
YOUR KING WILL RETURN SOON, ZENOBIA. I PROMISE YOU THAT.
MITRA HAS ALWAYS BEEN KIND TO HIM, AYELET, I TRUST ISHTAR WILL AS WELL.

SHE IS INDEED A QUEENLY BEAUTY, IS SHE NOT, MOTHER?
YES, SON. AND YOU ARE AGAIN MAN OF THE PALACE WHILE YOUR FATHER RELIVES HIS YOUTH.

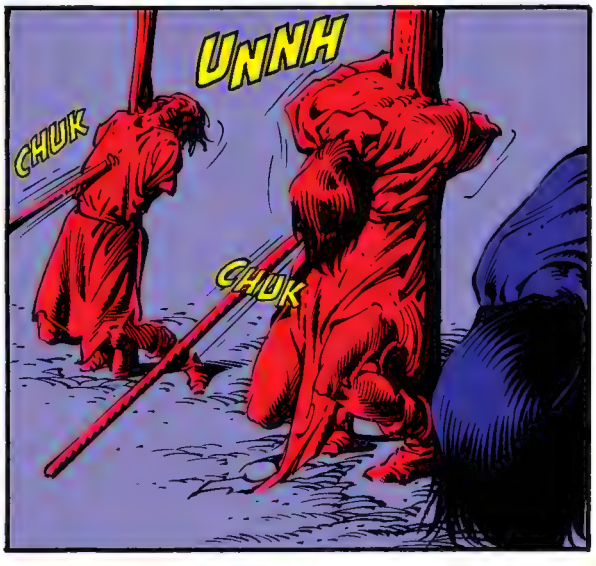

TEL-AMMON...
LET THE RABBLE PRATTLE THEIR RUMORS AS THEY ALWAYS HAVE, BUT FEAR NOT, MY IVORY-LIMBED BEAUTIES.
NO SUPERSTITIOUS PROPHECIES CAN BETRAY YOUR KING.
IN LESS THAN ONE MONTH'S TIME, WE CELEBRATE THRICE SEVEN YEARS MY REIGN, AND ALL SHEM WILL ECHO WITH THE RIOT OF OUR REVELRY.

WE AWAIT ONLY YOUR MAJESTY'S WORD.

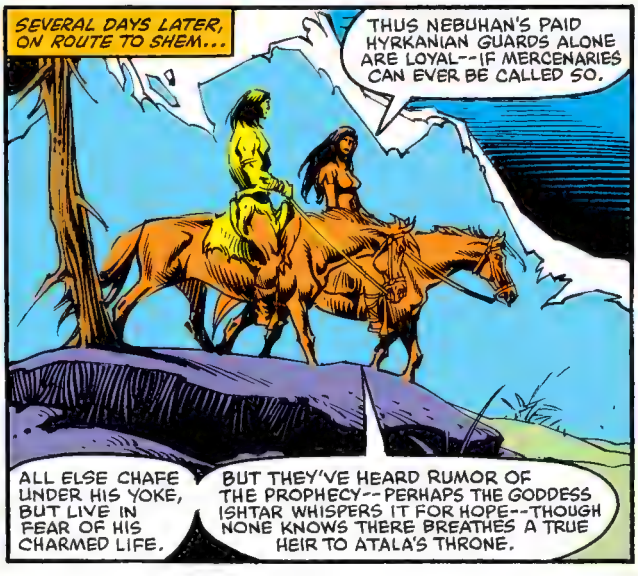
DISPATCH THE WRETCHES. SO NEBUHAN COMMANDS!
GADUP
GADUP


FOR THE LOVE OF ISHTAR, HAVE YOU NO MERCY IN YOUR VILLAINOUS BLACK SOUL, NEBUHAN!?

HAVE A MUZZLE TO SILENCE YOUR YAPPING, DOG!


UNNH
CHUK
CHUK

MENASHAM, FEED SEVERAL OF THESE EXECUTED TO OUR CROCODILE, AND HANG THE REST IN SHULAMIT MARKET SQUARE.
WE CAN BE CERTAIN NONE ELSE SHALL EVADE THIS WEEK'S TAXES.

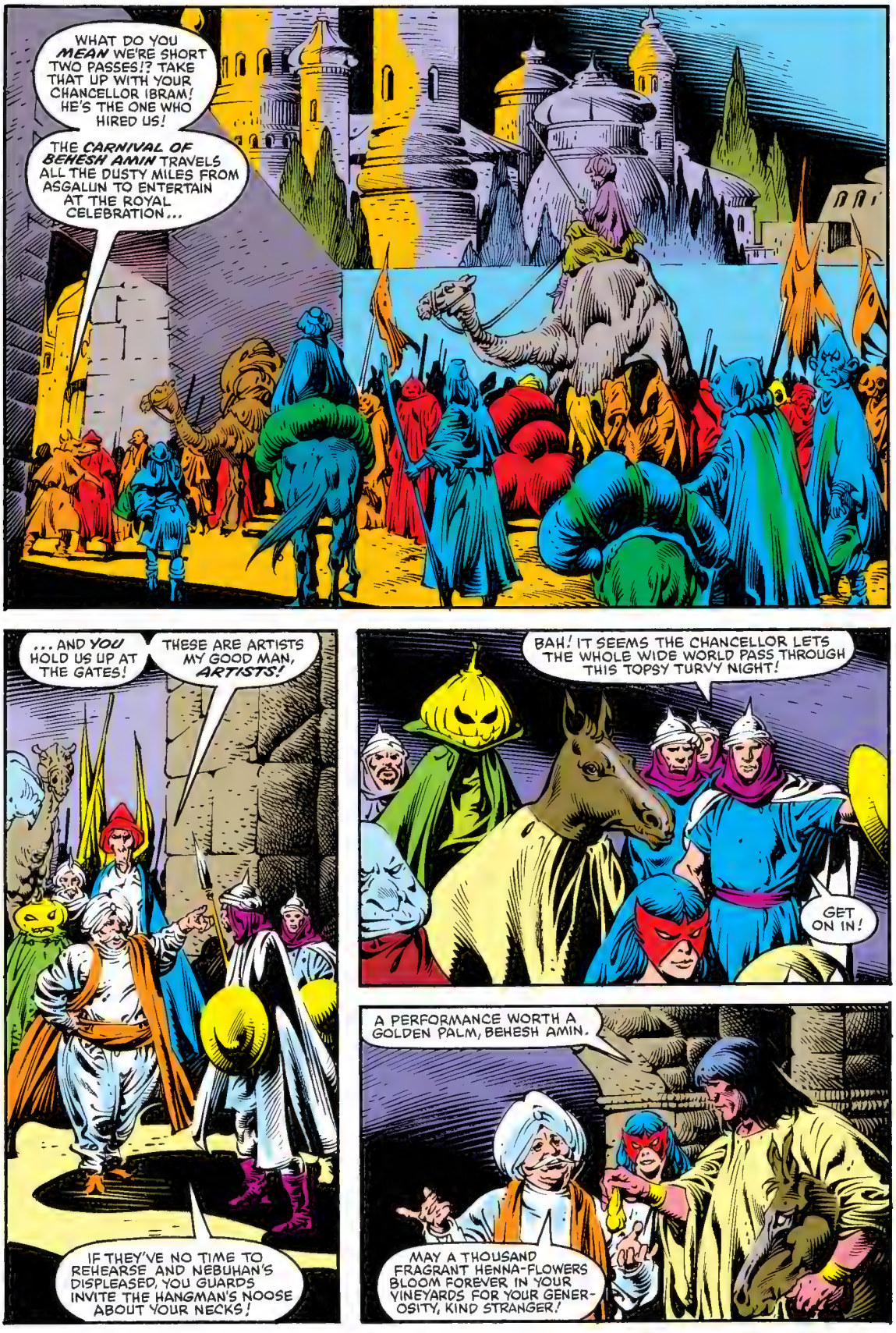

SEVERAL DAYS LATER, ON ROUTE TO SHEM...
THUS NEBUHAN'S PAID HYRKANIAN GUARDS ALONE ARE LOYAL--IF MERCENARIES CAN EVER BE CALLED SO.
ALL ELSE CHAFE UNDER HIS YOKE, BUT LIVE IN FEAR OF HIS CHARMED LIFE.
BUT THEY'VE HEARD RUMOR OF THE PROPHECY--PERHAPS THE GODDESS ISHTAR WHISPERS IT FOR HOPE--THOUGH NONE KNOWS THERE BREATHES A TRUE HEIR TO ATALA'S THRONE.

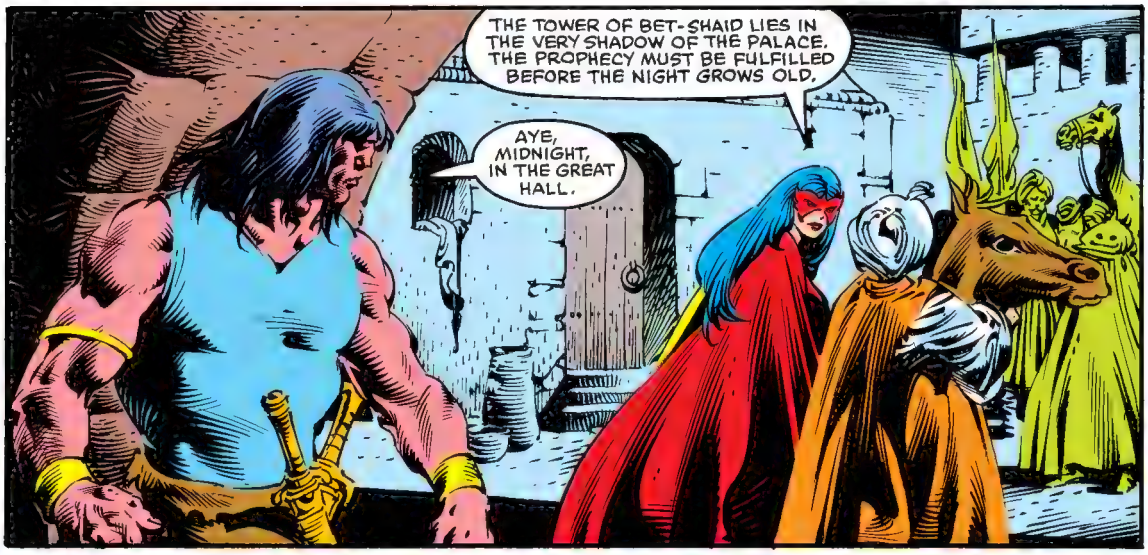
THOUGH ALL WILL HAIL AND JOIN US ONCE WE'VE SLAIN MY CRUEL FATHER. CONAN, WHO--!?
WELL, WELL, TWO STINKING GADABOUTS WHAT HAVEN'T PAID THE BORDER TAX!
BACK TO YOUR KENNELS, YOU MIS-BEGOTTEN CURS!
OR I'LL CARVE YOUR SOULS A PASSAGE TO HADES RIGHT THROUGH YOUR GUTS!
DOES YOU REFUSE TO PAY, THEN!?
AYE, NOR WILL WE BROOK DELAY FROM LOUTISH HIGHWAYMEN!

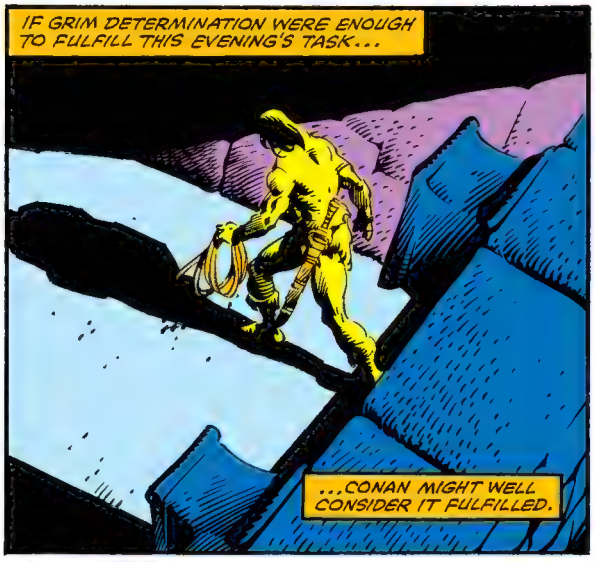
YOU HEARD HER-- WE'VE NO MORE TIME TO WASTE! NOW OUT OF OUR WAY, SCUM!
KICK
SLUSH!
WHO DOES YOU THINK Y'ARE, LOUD-MOUTHED SHE-DOG!?
SKAAG
GLAARGH
'TIS SHE-LION, MISCREANT!
WHERE DOES YOU RUN, WORTHLESS TRAITOR!? STAND TO AND FIGHT!
AND FORFEIT ME HIDE TO THEM TWO DEVILS? MITRA, NEVER!

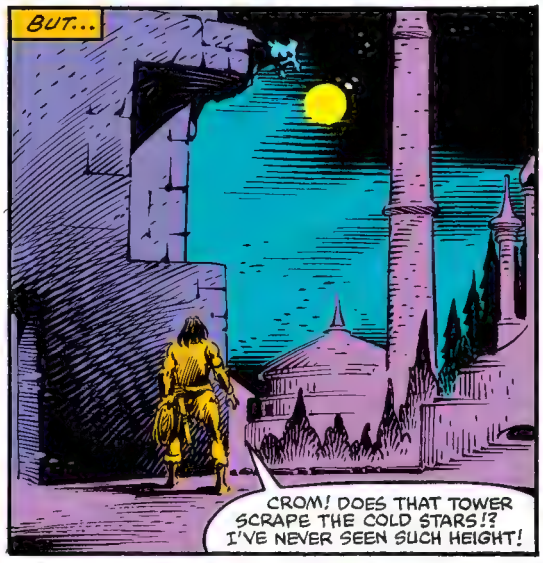
SO--BACK, YOU WHITE-LIVERED EXCUSE FOR A THIEF!
NOW, SINCE YOU'VE THE SMELL OF A MOUNTAIN GOAT--
--LET'S SEE IF YOU'VE THE SURE-FOOTING OF ONE AS WELL.
NNO!
BEL'S HOLY NAME! DON'T LEAVE ME FALL!
BUT YOU'VE PAID NO RESCUE TAX! HA!

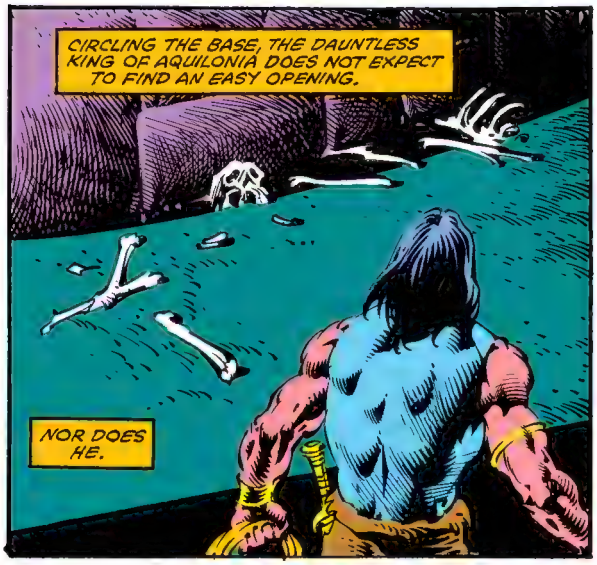
BEL GRANT YE GOLD AND RICHES, WOMAN!
YOUR GOD OF THIEVES CAN KEEP HIS GIFTS.
OFF WITH YOU, BRIGAND!
HA! YOU'RE MERCIFUL FOR A DESERT NOMAD, AYELET!
IS IT NOT A QUEEN'S RESPONSIBILITY TO SHOW MERCY WHERE SHE CAN, CONAN?
THERE'S A POINT, PRINCESS, SO LONG AS COMPASSION DOESN'T CLOUD A MONARCH'S JUSTICE.
BUT COME, CONAN -- WE SPEAK OF KINGS AND QUEENS, AND I'VE YET TO CLAIM MY THRONE.
THE NEW MOON BATHES THE INNER WALLS OF TEL-AMMON IN ITS GLOW, LIGHTING THE WAY FOR NOISY REVELERS AND GUESTS...
...FOR TONIGHT MARKS ANNIVERSARY OF KING NEBUHAN'S REIGN...


WHAT DO YOU *MEAN* WE'RE SHORT TWO PASSES!? TAKE THAT UP WITH YOUR CHANCELLOR IBRAM! HE'S THE ONE WHO HIRED US!
THE *CARNIVAL OF BEHESH AMIN* TRAVELS ALL THE DUSTY MILES FROM ASGALUN TO ENTERTAIN AT THE ROYAL CELEBRATION...
...AND *YOU* HOLD US UP AT THE GATES!
THESE ARE ARTISTS MY GOOD MAN, *ARTISTS!*
IF THEY'VE NO TIME TO REHEARSE AND NEBUHAN'S DISPLEASED, YOU GUARDS INVITE THE HANGMAN'S NOOSE ABOUT YOUR NECKS!
BAH! IT SEEMS THE CHANCELLOR LETS THE WHOLE WIDE WORLD PASS THROUGH THIS TOPSY TURVY NIGHT!
GET ON IN!
A PERFORMANCE WORTH A GOLDEN PALM, BEHESH AMIN.
MAY A THOUSAND FRAGRANT HENNA-FLOWERS BLOOM FOREVER IN YOUR VINEYARDS FOR YOUR GENEROSITY, KIND STRANGER!


THE TOWER OF BET-SHAID LIES IN THE VERY SHADOW OF THE PALACE. THE PROPHECY MUST BE FULFILLED BEFORE THE NIGHT GROWS OLD.
AYE, MIDNIGHT, IN THE GREAT HALL.

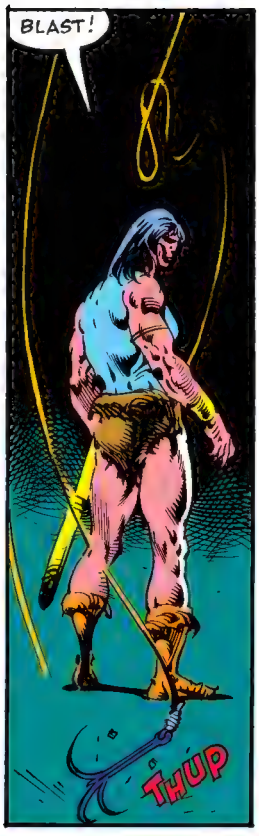

IF GRIM DETERMINATION WERE ENOUGH TO FULFILL THIS EVENING'S TASK...
...CONAN MIGHT WELL CONSIDER IT FULFILLED.


BUT...
CROM! DOES THAT TOWER SCRAPE THE COLD STARS!? I'VE NEVER SEEN SUCH HEIGHT!

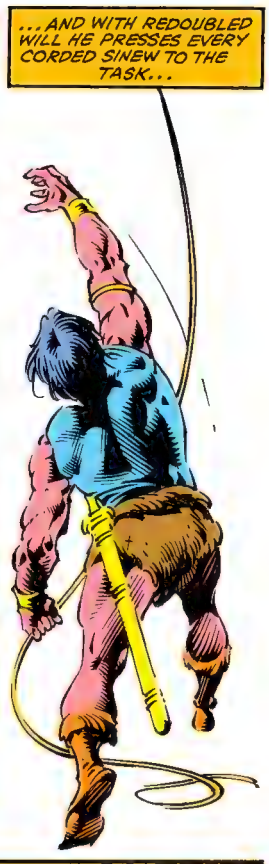

CIRCLING THE BASE, THE DAUNTLESS KING OF AQUILONIA DOES NOT EXPECT TO FIND AN EASY OPENING.
NOR DOES HE.

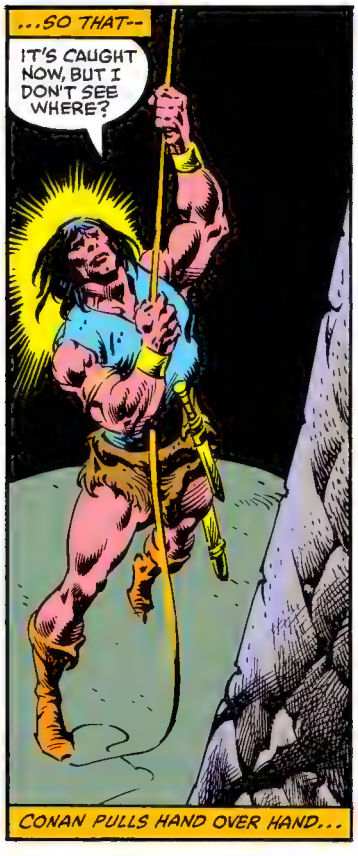
CROM'S GULLET! IT SEEMS BUILT OF ONE PIECE WITH NO LEDGE FOR THIS GRAPPLING IRON TO CATCH. STILL, I'LL CAST--

SWISH


BLAST!
THUP

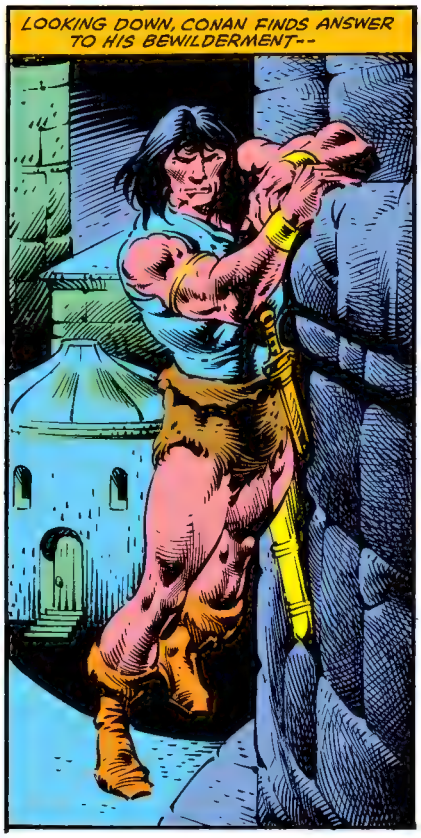
THE DEVIL CONFOUND THIS CLOUD-CAPPED TURRET!
BUT EVEN AS HE CURSES THE TOWER'S SOARING HEIGHT, CONAN WONDERS IF TWENTY SPRINGS GONE HE MIGHT NOT HAVE MADE THAT FIRST CAST CATCH...

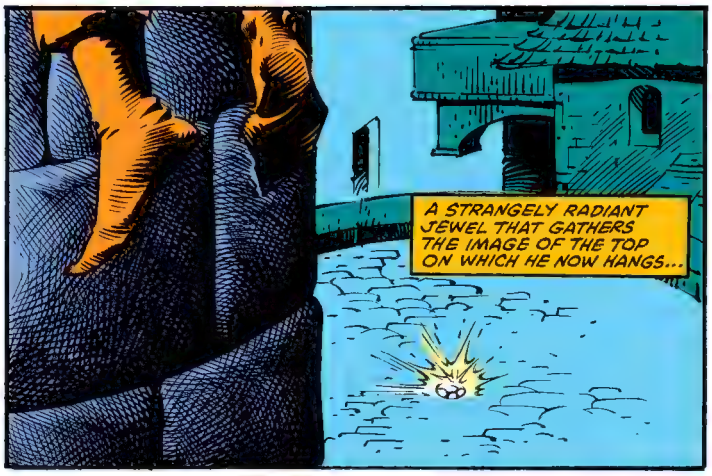

...AND WITH REDOUBLED WILL HE PRESSES EVERY CORDED SINEW TO THE TASK...

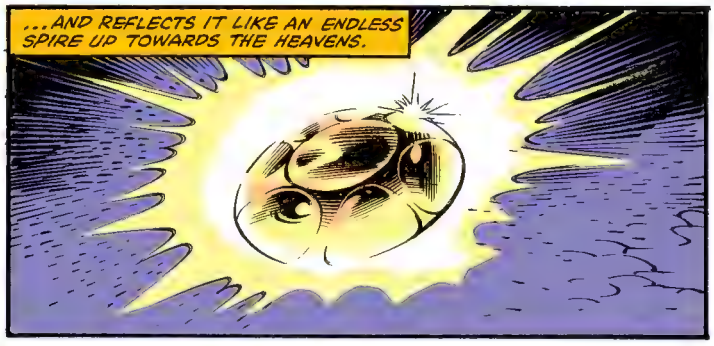

...SO THAT--
IT'S CAUGHT NOW, BUT I DON'T SEE WHERE?
CONAN PULLS HAND OVER HAND...

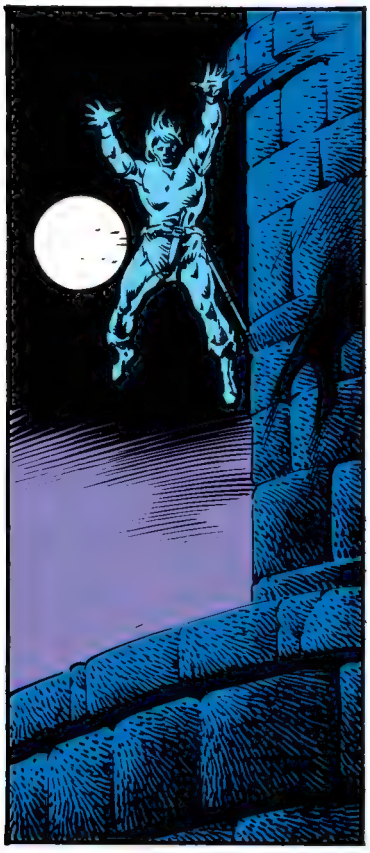
...PUSHING MORE THAN TWO HUNDRED POUNDS OF CIMMERIAN MUSCLE TOWARDS THE SKY.
CROM'S GUT! FROM THE GROUND NO LEDGE APPEARED HERE!

AND ABOVE HIM, AN INSUBSTANTIAL TOWER SHIMMERS IN THE AIR, AN ILLUSION OF THE EYE.

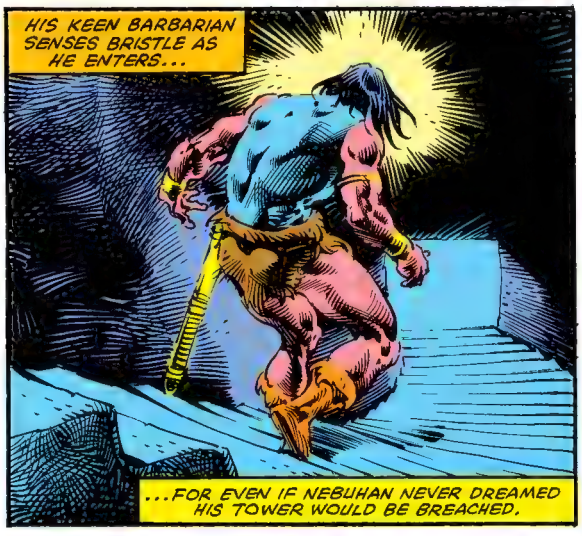

LOOKING DOWN, CONAN FINDS ANSWER TO HIS BEWILDERMENT--

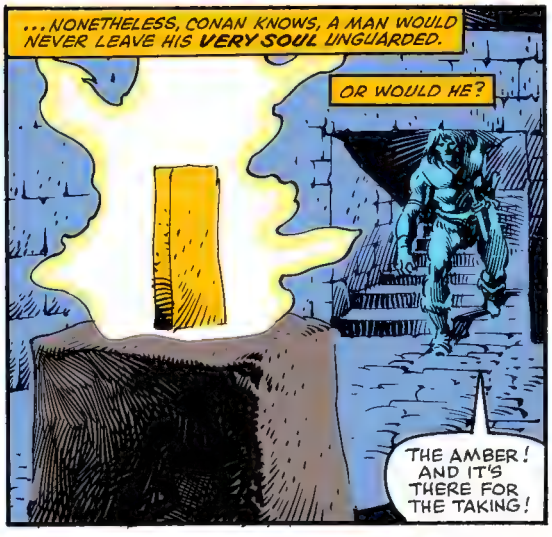

A STRANGELY RADIANT JEWEL THAT GATHERS THE IMAGE OF THE TOP ON WHICH HE NOW HANGS...


...AND REFLECTS IT LIKE AN ENDLESS SPIRE UP TOWARDS THE HEAVENS.

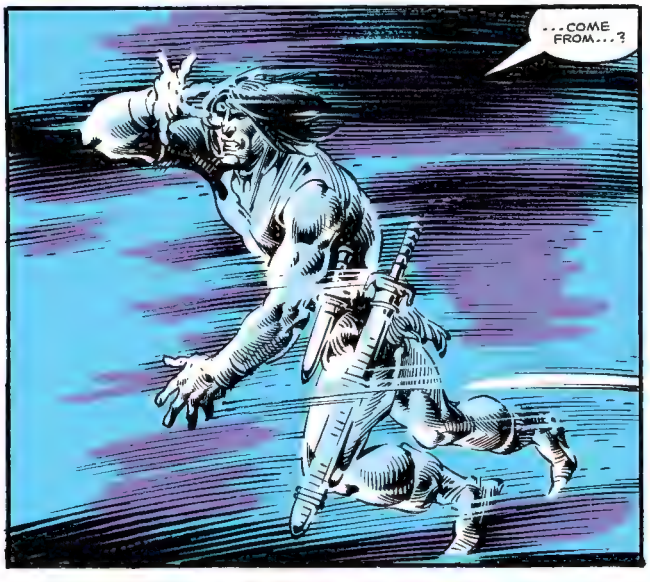


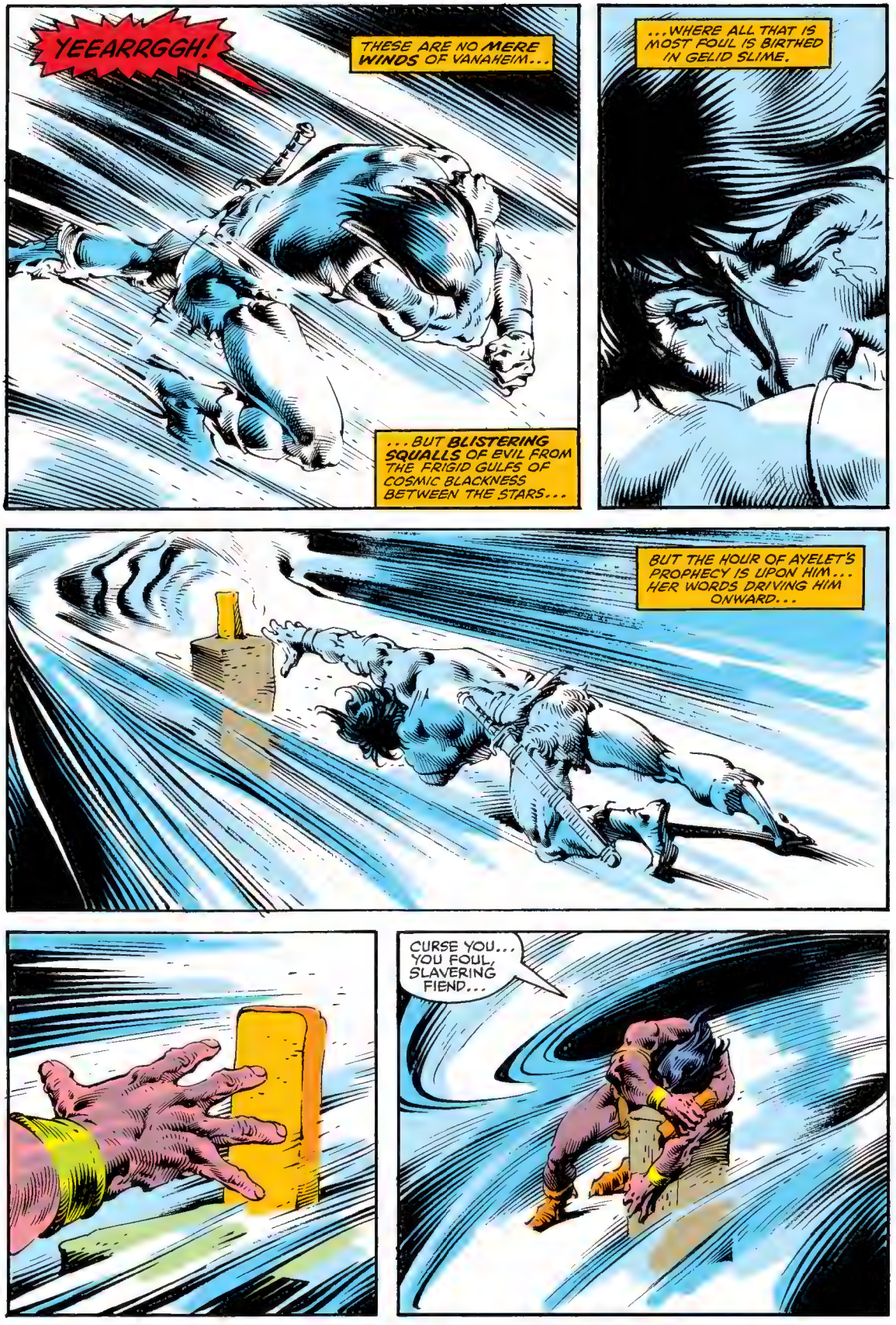
NOW... WHAT HAVE WE HERE...?


HIS KEEN BARBARIAN SENSES BRISTLE AS HE ENTERS...
...FOR EVEN IF NEBUHAN NEVER DREAMED HIS TOWER WOULD BE BREACHED.


...NONETHELESS, CONAN KNOWS, A MAN WOULD NEVER LEAVE HIS VERY SOUL UNGUARDED.
OR WOULD HE?
THE AMBER! AND IT'S THERE FOR THE TAKING!

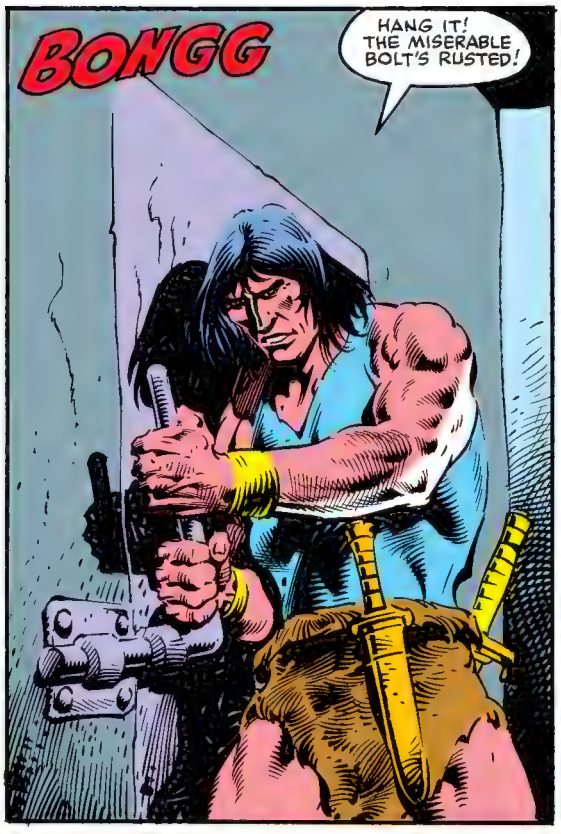
WORDS SPOKEN TOO SOON.
CROM! WHERE DID THIS INFERNAL CHILL...


...COME FROM...?

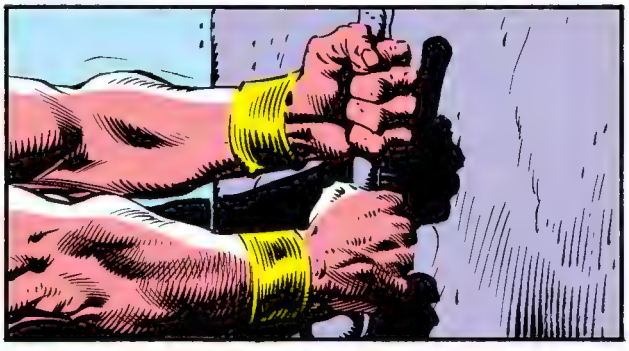

YEEARRGGH!
THESE ARE NO MERE WINDS OF VANAHEIM...
...BUT BLISTERING SQUALLS OF EVIL FROM THE FRIGID GULFS OF COSMIC BLACKNESS BETWEEN THE STARS...
...WHERE ALL THAT IS MOST FOUL IS BIRTHED IN GELID SLIME.
BUT THE HOUR OF AYELET'S PROPHECY IS UPON HIM... HER WORDS DRIVING HIM ONWARD...
CURSE YOU... YOU FOUL, SLAVERING FIEND...

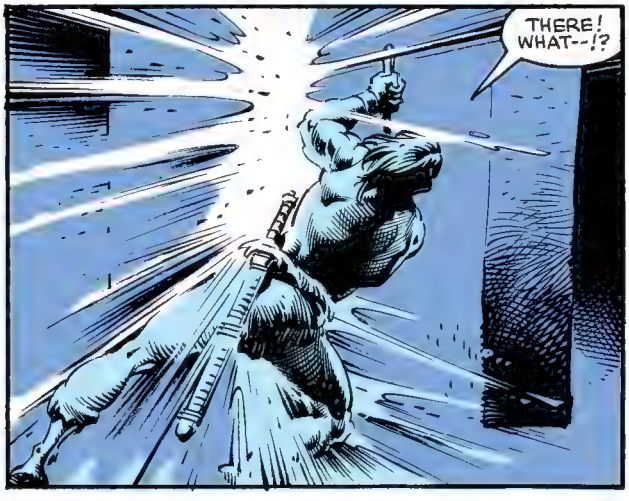
...I HAVE MY PRIZE!
ALL THE PAIN HE HAS BORNE 'TIL NOW SEEMS LIKE A COOL MORNING DRAFT...
...COMPARED TO THE ULTIMATE COLDNESS OF THE DIABOLIC NORTHERN GOLD THAT BURNS HIS FINGERS LIKE A THOUSAND NAILS OF ICE DRIVEN SHIVERING THROUGH HIS FLESH.
AND I MEAN TO...
...KEEP IT...
BONGG BONGG
WHAT UNEARTHLY RINGING--!?
CROM ONLY KNOWS, BUT THAT'S A SIGNAL. THE AMBER'S BEEN FILCHED, OR I'M A BLACK-EYED PICT!
THAT MEANS I STAND A LIKELY CHANCE OF BEING RAKED WITH A VOLLEY OF ARROWS IF I RISK THE GRAPPLING DOWN.
BUT THERE IS THE STAIRCASE...

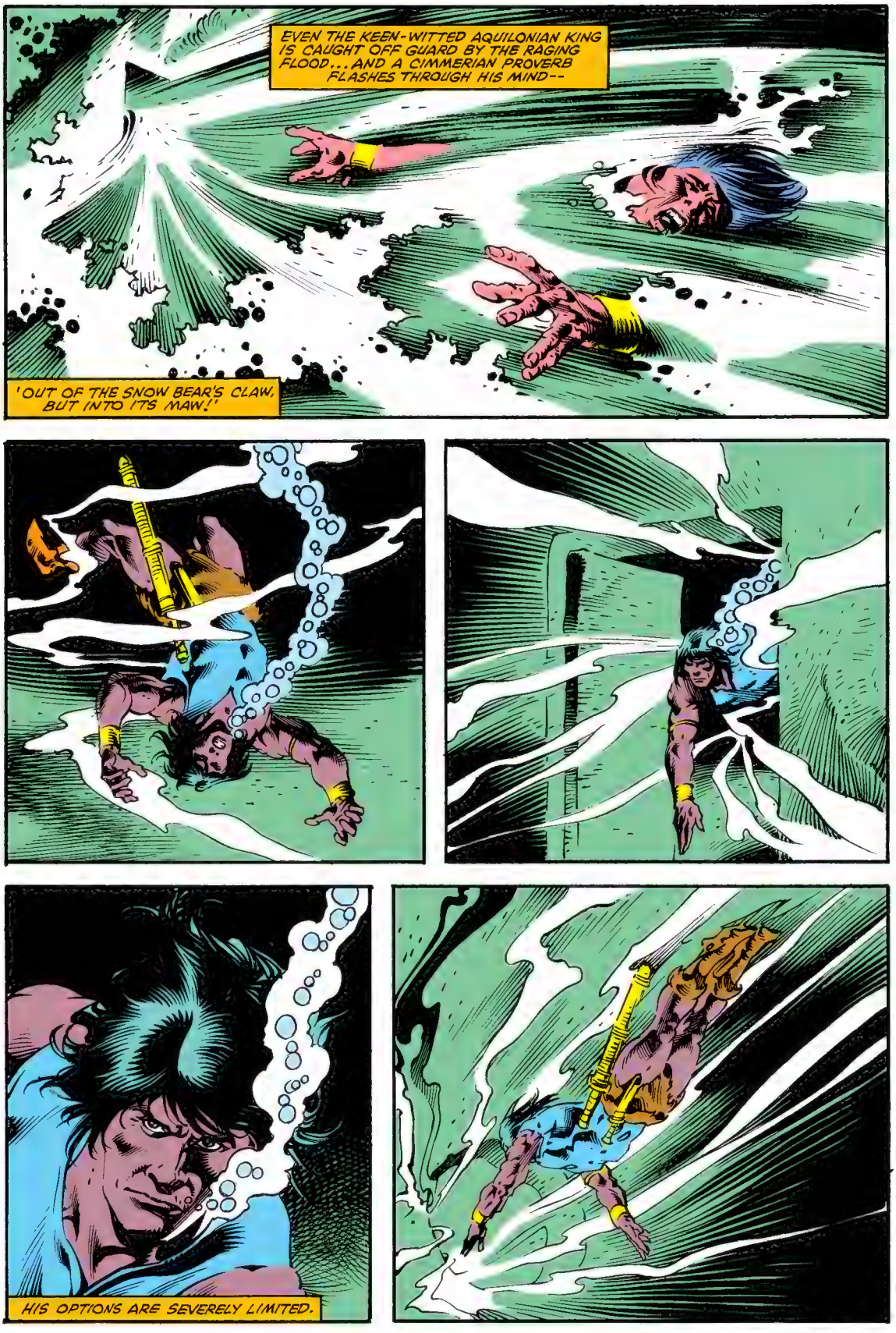
BONGG
ANY DOOR'S BETTER THAN A BLIND END.

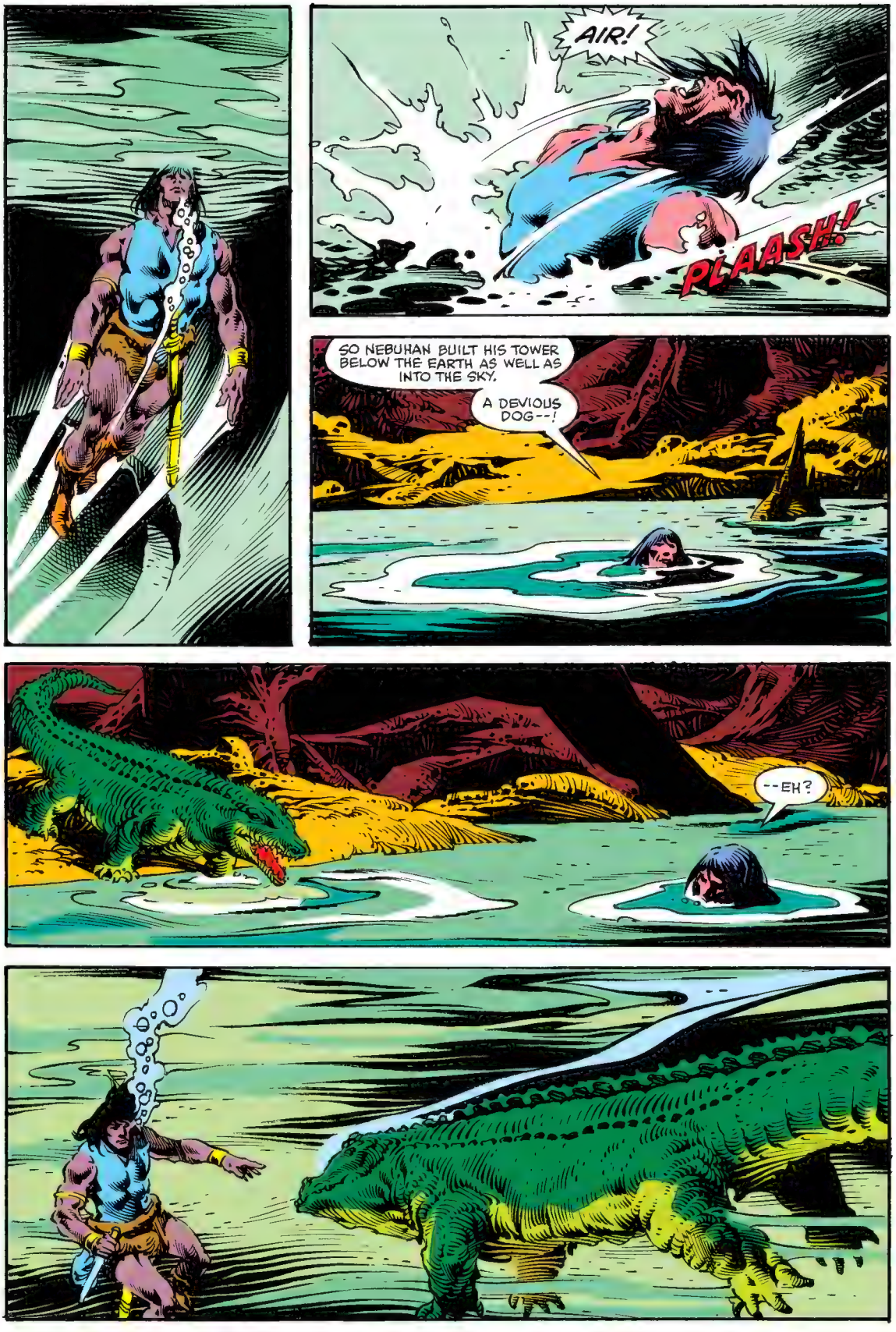

BONGG
HANG IT! THE MISERABLE BOLT'S RUSTED!

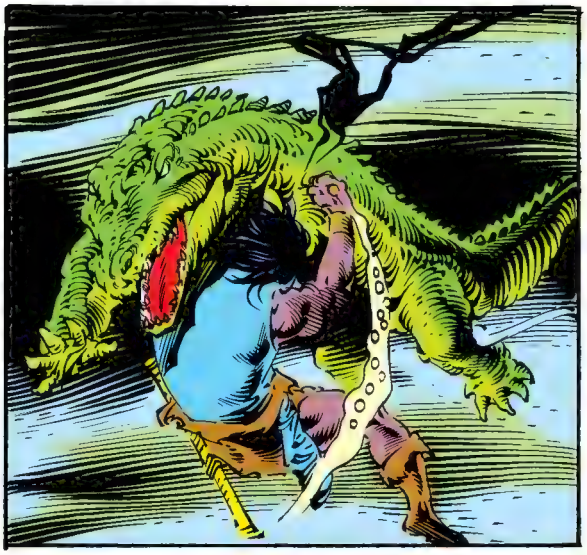
BUT HE KNOWS THERE IS LITTLE TIME LEFT TO MIDNIGHT.
AND THERE IS A NOBLE AND STUNNING QUEEN-TO-BE WHO AWAITS HIM.



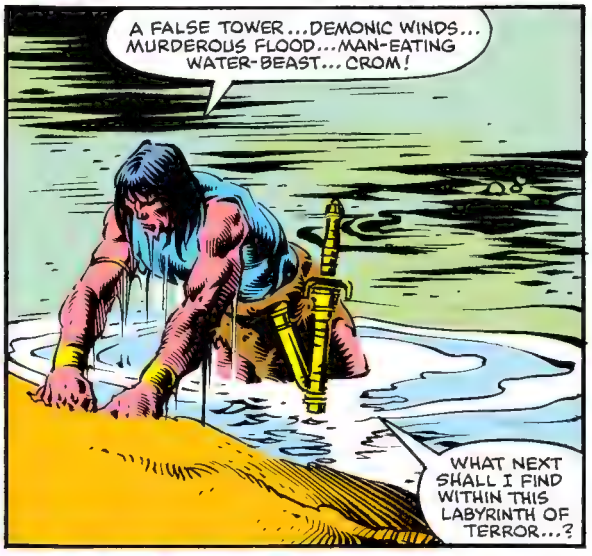

THERE! WHAT--!?

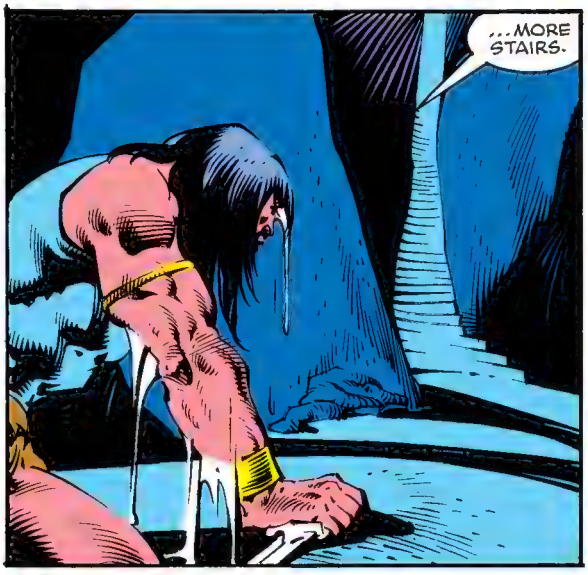

EVEN THE KEEN-WITTED AQUILONIAN KING IS CAUGHT OFF GUARD BY THE RAGING FLOOD... AND A CIMMERIAN PROVERB FLASHES THROUGH HIS MIND--
'OUT OF THE SNOW BEAR'S CLAW, BUT INTO ITS MAW!'
HIS OPTIONS ARE SEVERELY LIMITED.


AIR!
PLAASH!
SO NEBUHAN BUILT HIS TOWER BELOW THE EARTH AS WELL AS INTO THE SKY.
A DEVIOUS DOG--!
--EH?

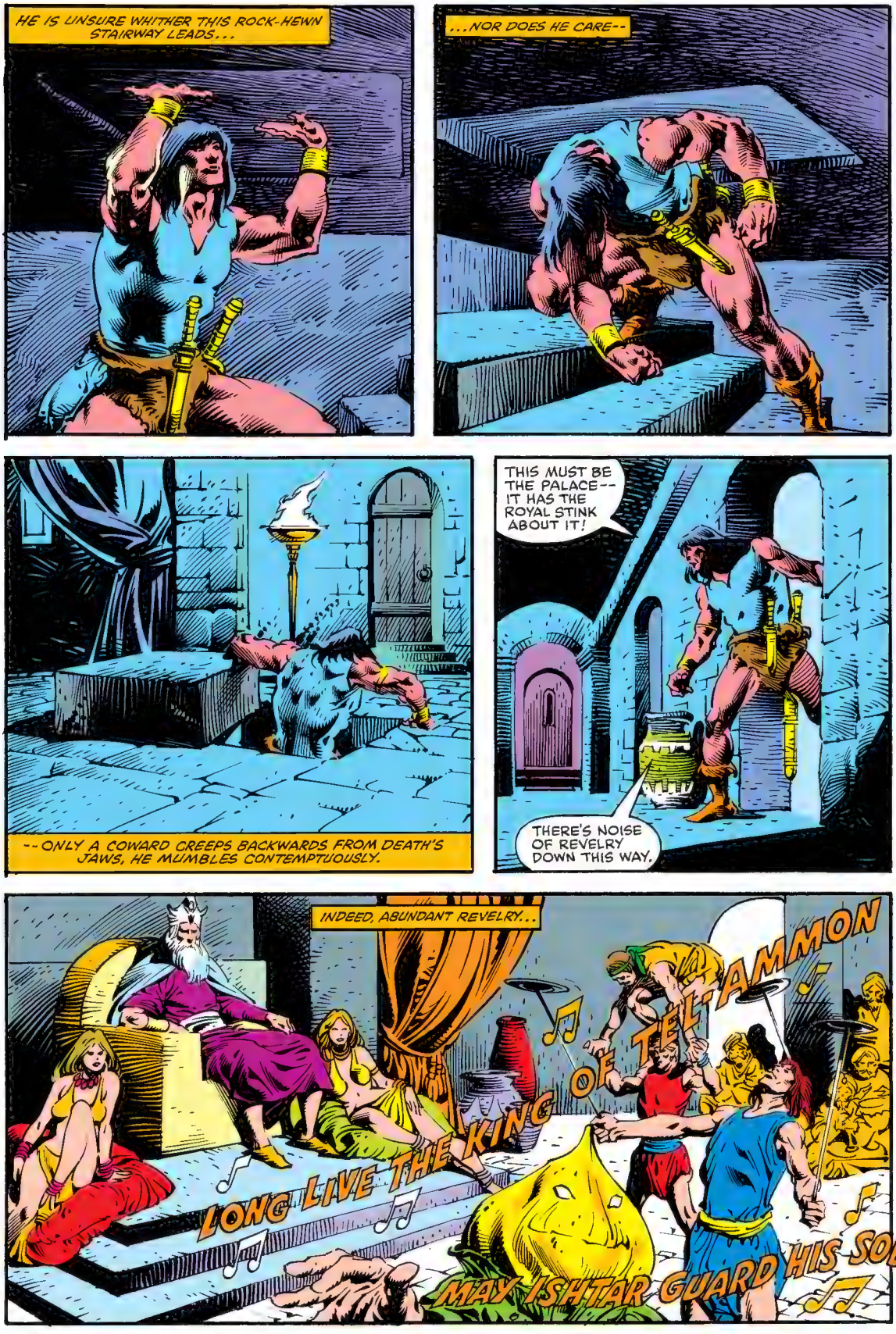


SWAASH!
PLAASH


A FALSE TOWER...DEMONIC WINDS... MURDEROUS FLOOD...MAN-EATING WATER-BEAST... CROM!
WHAT NEXT SHALL I FIND WITHIN THIS LABYRINTH OF TERROR...?


...MORE STAIRS.

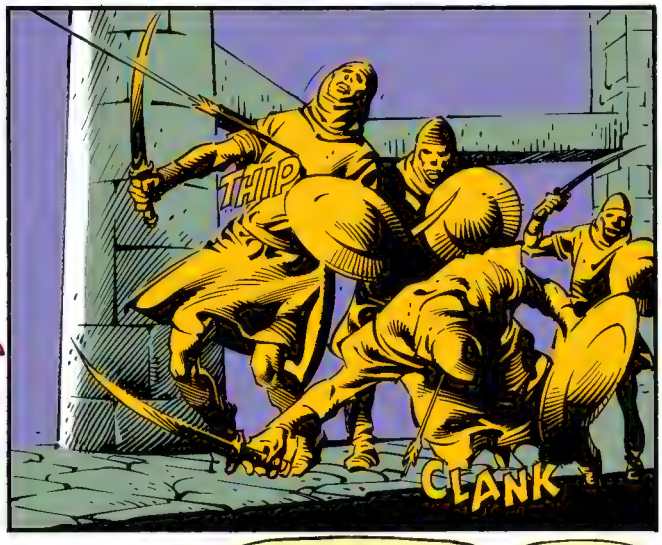
I'VE ALREADY CLIMBED THE EQUAL OF TEN ZIKKURATS THIS DAY!

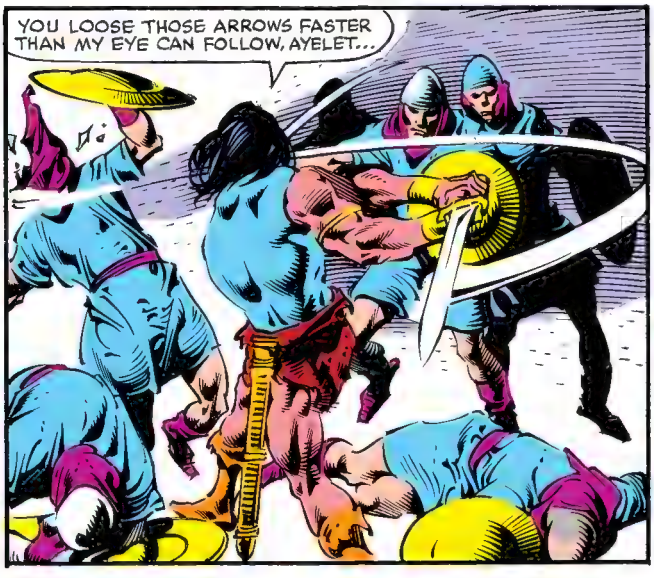

HE IS UNSURE WHITHER THIS ROCK-HEWN STAIRWAY LEADS...
...NOR DOES HE CARE--
--ONLY A COWARD CREEPS BACKWARDS FROM DEATH'S JAWS, HE MUMBLES CONTEMPTUOUSLY.
THIS MUST BE THE PALACE-- IT HAS THE ROYAL STINK ABOUT IT!
THERE'S NOISE OF REVELRY DOWN THIS WAY.
INDEED, ABUNDANT REVELRY...
LONG LIVE THE KING OF TEL-AMMON!
MAY ISHTAR GUARD HIS SOUL

...EH?
IT'S THE FAINTEST OF SOUNDS, HOPELESSLY LOST AMONG THE CACOPHONOUS REVELRY...
...THAT KNELL...
BONGG!
...YET IT RINGS LOUD AND STRONG IN KING NEBUHAN'S EAR.
AYELET!
WHAT!? WHO IS THIS WILD DOG!?
I'M YOUR RED DOOM, SWINE!
AYELET! THE AMBER'S IN THIS POUCH!
ISHTAR! NOW THEN THE LIONESS WILL ROAR A BLOODY TYRANT'S DEATH!

GUARDS, UNBOWEL THEM!
GET ME THE POUCH!

A PITY, FOR A POCKETFUL OF SHEMITE GOLD...
...TO HAVE BARTERED YOUR HYRKANIAN SOULS!

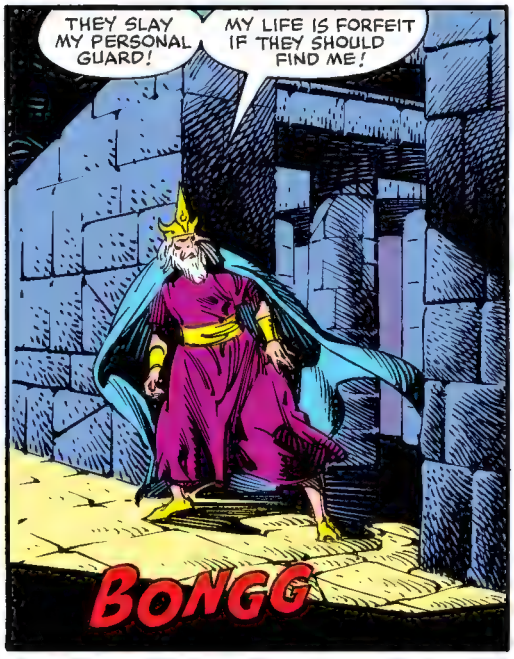

THIP
CLANK


YOU LOOSE THOSE ARROWS FASTER THAN MY EYE CAN FOLLOW, AYELET...

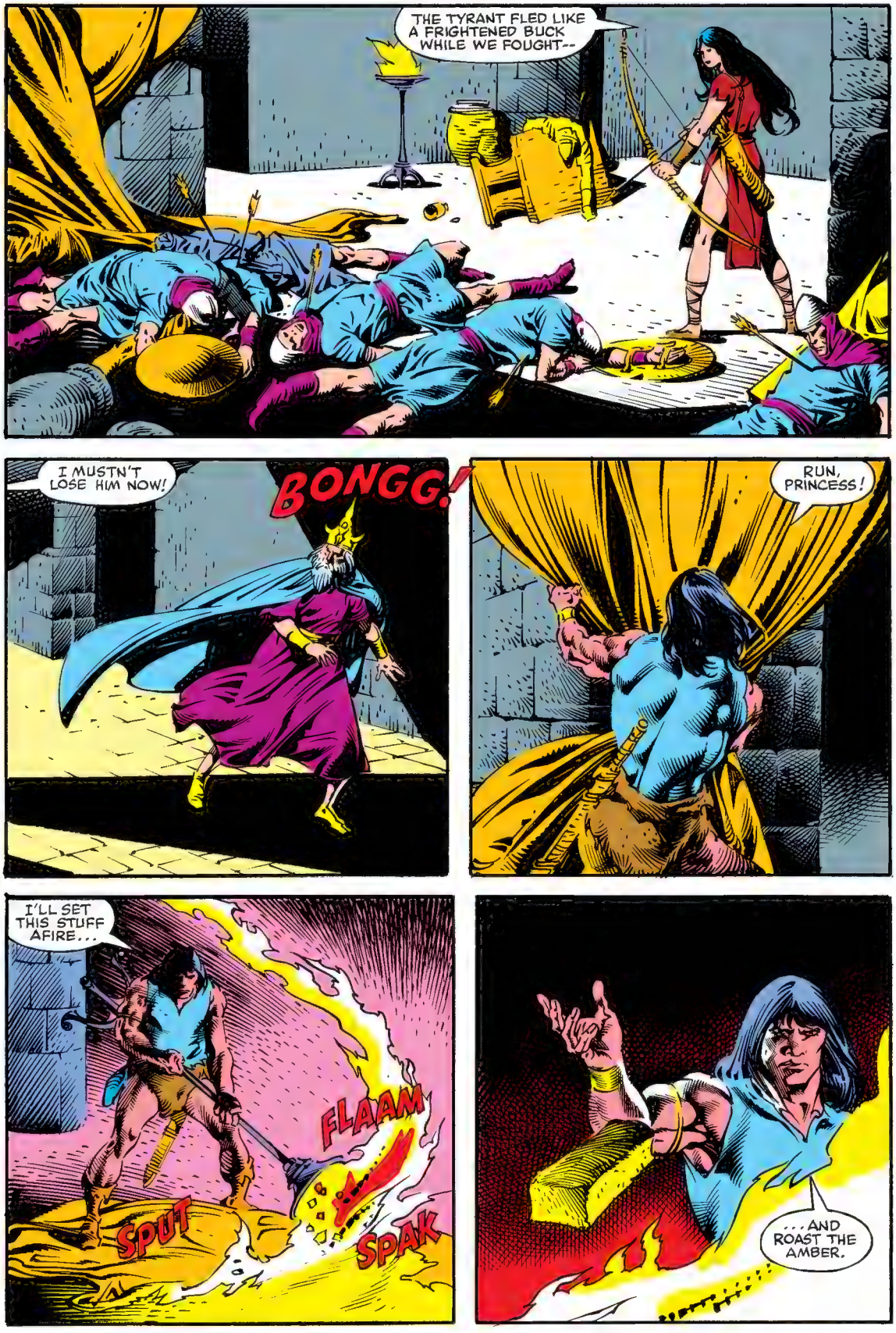
...BUT GIVE ME A HEFTY BROADSWORD ANYDAY...
...TO CLEAVE A DOG'S SKULL AND SPLATTER HIS BRAINS!

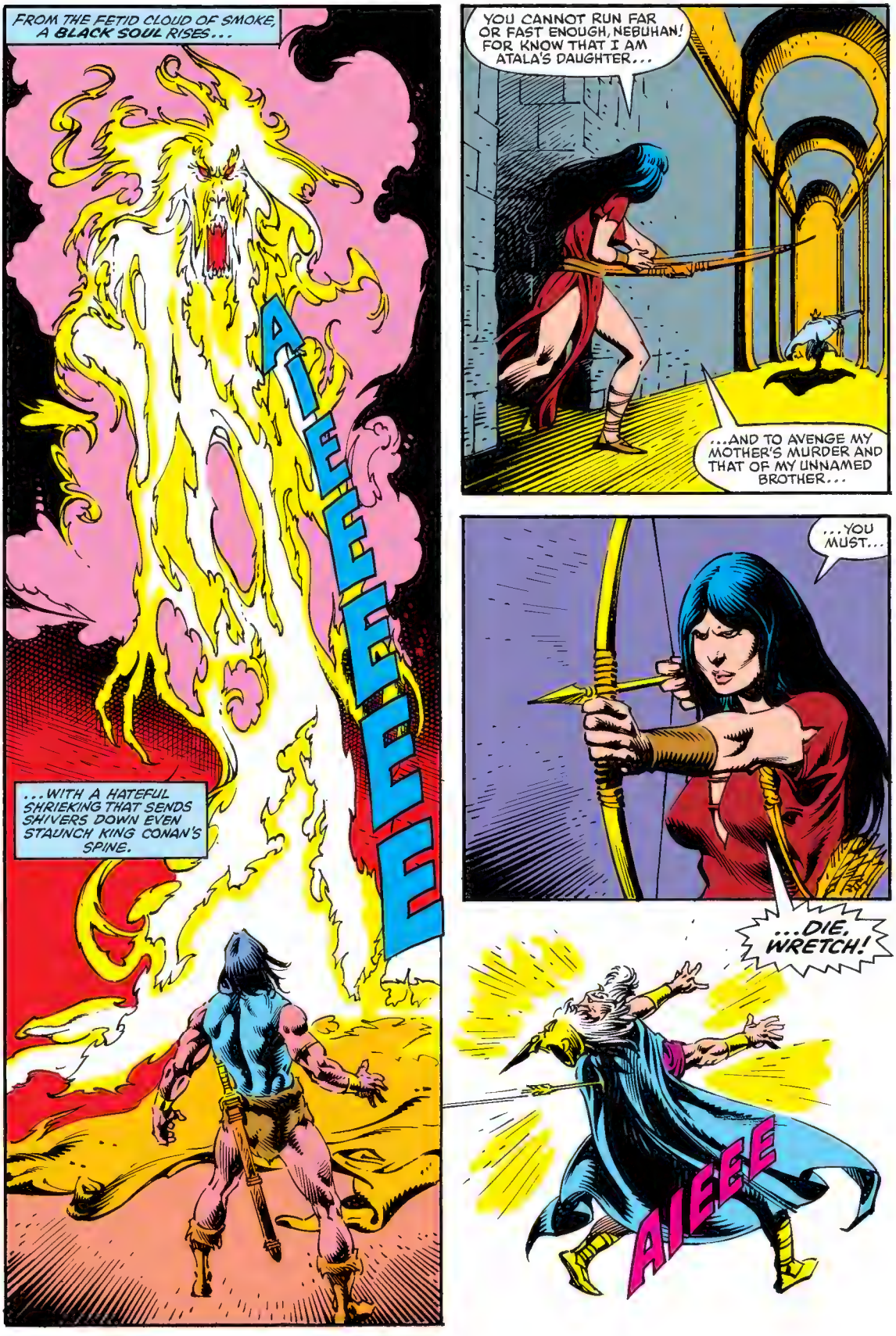
YET, NOT EVERYONE THRILLS TO THE GORE OF BATTLE AS DOES CONAN...
LET ME THROUGH!
RUN!
FLEE!

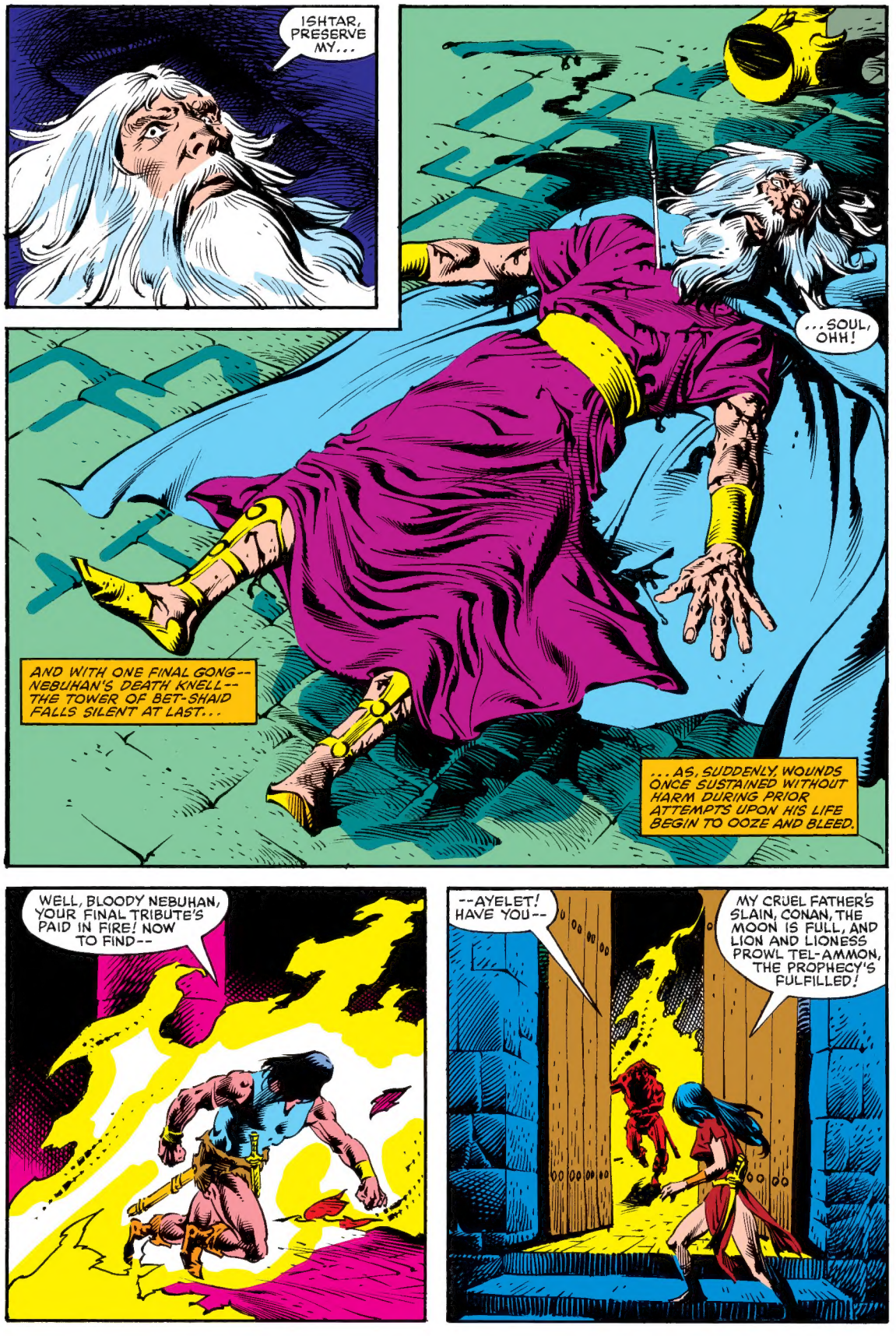
FOR SURE, YOU'RE NO WARRIORS, BUT CHAMBERMAIDS COSTUMED FOR NEBUHAN'S PARTYING!
CLANG
CLATTER


THEY SLAY MY PERSONAL GUARD!
MY LIFE IS FORFEIT IF THEY SHOULD FIND ME!
BONGG

NOW...WHAT OF NEBUHAN...?


THE TYRANT FLED LIKE A FRIGHTENED BUCK WHILE WE FOUGHT--
I MUSTN'T LOSE HIM NOW!
BONGG!
RUN, PRINCESS!
I'LL SET THIS STUFF AFIRE...
FLAAM
SPUT
SPAK
...AND ROAST THE AMBER.


FROM THE FETID CLOUD OF SMOKE, A BLACK SOUL RISES...
AIEEEEEEE
...WITH A HATEFUL SHRIEKING THAT SENDS SHIVERS DOWN EVEN STAUNCH KING CONAN'S SPINE.
YOU CANNOT RUN FAR OR FAST ENOUGH, NEBUHAN! FOR KNOW THAT I AM ATALA'S DAUGHTER...
...AND TO AVENGE MY MOTHER'S MURDER AND THAT OF MY UNNAMED BROTHER...
...YOU MUST...
...DIE, WRETCH!
AIEEE


ISHTAR, PRESERVE MY...
...SOUL, OHH!
AND WITH ONE FINAL GONG-- NEBUHAN'S DEATH KNELL-- THE TOWER OF BET-SHAID FALLS SILENT AT LAST...
...AS, SUDDENLY, WOUNDS ONCE SUSTAINED WITHOUT HARM DURING PRIOR ATTEMPTS UPON HIS LIFE BEGIN TO OOZE AND BLEED.
WELL, BLOODY NEBUHAN, YOUR FINAL TRIBUTE'S PAID IN FIRE! NOW TO FIND--
--AYELET! HAVE YOU--
MY CRUEL FATHER'S SLAIN, CONAN, THE MOON IS FULL, AND LION AND LIONESS PROWL TEL-AMMON, THE PROPHECY'S FULFILLED!

LOOK--THE WICKED KING'S PALACE BURNS!
YOUR EYES AND EARS, PEOPLE OF TEL-AMMON! NEBUHAN IS DEAD.
TONIGHT A NEW AND RIGHTFUL QUEEN, AYELET, DAUGHTER OF BELOVED ATALA, SITS YOUR THRONE.
I HOLD THE HOLY SCROLL OF PROPHECY!
LONG LIVE THE QUEEN!
THE TYRANT'S REIGN OF BLOOD IS OVER, AND ISHTAR'S FLAMES NOW CLEANSE THE PALACE TO ITS FOUNDATION.
JUSTICE, TEMPERED BY MERCY, RETURNS TO TEL-AMMON.
BEHOLD THE BIRTHMARK OF THE LIONESS!
LET AQUILONIA BE THE FIRST NATION TO RECOGNIZE QUEEN AYELET!
STILL, I'VE A QUEEN OF MY OWN AWAITS MY RETURN, AND, COME DAWN, I'M TARANTIA-BOUND.
BUT, CROM! DAWN'S YET A FAR WAYS OFF--WHAT SAY WE MEASURE THE HOURS 'TIL THEN IN FLAGONS OF PURPLE SHEMITE WINE...?
FIN

KING CONAN

% MARVEL COMICS GROUP
387 Park Avenue South
New York, New York 10016

JIM OWSLEY
EDITOR

Al Zelenetz, the new scripter on **KING CONAN,** and I had lunch the other day (on Marvel, of course) to toss around a few ideas for the strip. We were presented with the problem any editorial team encounters when they take over a highly successful book with a proven track record of excellence: how to top what's been done before. How to improve a good thing amidst a legion of cynical bystanders who are all waiting for you to fall on your face. Well, we talked, and talked. The more we talked, the more great ideas were suggested. The excitement grew. By the time we were done, Al's eyes were blazing, his heart was racing, and he was standing atop our table, butter knife in hand, screaming in barbaric rage.

Well, not exactly. But he did kill a perfectly good tree taking a zillion pages of notes, and there were hushed whispers of the words "epic" and "magnificence". You see, we're going to blow **KING CONAN** up and start over; and we're doing it with **dynamite.**

DYNAMITE: Rudy Nebres walked into my office last October and told me that, after several years of working almost exclusively for an alternate publisher, he was returning to Marvel. I asked him if he wanted to baby-sit **KING CONAN** while Marc Silvestri sharpened his pencils. He said he would if I got John Buscema to draw it. John said yes; the rest is magic.

DYNAMITE: Rudy's pencilling *and* inking **KING CONAN #18,** a sample of which appears on the following page. Next issue's Alan Zelenetz thriller "Devil Of Darfar" promises to be not only one of the best sword and sorcery mags you'll read this year, but one of the best *comics* you'll read this year. Period. Reserve your copy now. Don't take chances.

DYNAMITE: Penciller Marc Silvestri returns after a well-earned rest in **KING CONAN #19.** The first few pages arrived yesterday. These are blockbuster graphics guaranteed to leave you dazzled. Guaranteed. We promise.

DYNAMITE: Our companion black and white magazine **SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN** features another story by Buscema and Nebres this month **(#88 May).** A 50-page black and white masterpiece by Michael Fleisher called "Isle Of The Hunter".

DYNAMITE: KING CONAN #20. So awesome. So revolutionary. So completely different from anything we've ever done before, we can't even talk about it. Yet.

I guess what I'm trying to say is if you've never been into sword and sorcery before; if you never thought a barbarian book was for you... we're out to prove you dead wrong. This is the book to keep your eye on. This one. Watch this space.

This is the Marvel Age of comics. Again.

JIM OWSLEY

U.S. POSTAL SERVICE
STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION
(REQUIRED BY 39 U.S.C. 3685)

1. Title of Publication: KING CONAN
2. Date of Filing: October 11, 1982. 569-610
3. Frequency of Issue: BI-MONTHLY.
3A. No. of Issues Published Annually: 6.
3B. Annual Subscription Price: $6.00.
4. Location of Known Office of Publication: 387 Park Avenue South, New York, N.Y. 10016.
5. Location of the Headquarters or General Business Offices of the Publishers: 387 Park Avenue South, New York, N.Y. 10016.
6. Names and addresses of the publisher, editor, and managing editor are: Stan Lee, 387 Park Avenue South, New York, N.Y. 10016. Editor: Jim Shooter, 387 Park Avenue South, New York, N.Y. 10016. Managing Editor: Jim Shooter, 387 Park Avenue South, New York, N.Y. 10016.
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8. Known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages or other securities: None.
9. For completion by nonprofit organizations authorized to mail at special rates (Section 132.122, PSM). The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for Federal income tax purposes: (Check one.) [Have not changed during preceding 12 months. [Have changed during preceding 12 months (If changed, publisher must submit explanation with this statement.)
10. EXTENT AND NATURE OF CIRCULATION.
A. Total No. Copies Printed (net press run): Average no. of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 306,190. Single issue nearest to filing date: 304,519.
B. Paid Circulation: 1) Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors and counter sales: Average no. of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 141,480. Single issue nearest to filing date: 142,680. 2) Mail Subscriptions: Average no. of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 866. Single issue nearest to filing date: 1,475.
C. Total Paid Circulation: (Sum of 10B1 and 10B2): Average no. of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 142,346 Single issue nearest to filing date: 143,557.
D. Free Distribution by mail, carrier, or other means, samples, complimentary, and other free copies: Average no. of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 520. Single issue nearest to filing date: 640.
E. Total Distribution: (Sum of C and D): Average no. of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 142,866. Single issue nearest to filing date: 144,161.
F. Copies Not Distributed: 1) Office use, left-over, unaccounted, spoiled after printing: Average no. of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 695. Single issue nearest to filing date: 640. 2) Returns from News Agents: Average no. of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 162,629. Single issue nearest to filing date: 161,719.
G. Total: (Sum of E, F1 and 2, should equal net press run shown in A): Average no. of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 306,190. Single issue nearest to filing date: 304,519.
11. I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.

(signed) Ed Shukin — Business Manager

12. For completion by publishers mailing at the regular rates (Section 132.121, Postal Service Manual) 39 U.S.C. 3626 provides in pertinent part: "No person who would have been entitled to mail matter at such rates shall mail such matter at such rates unless he files annually with the Postal Service a written request for permission to mail matter at such rates."

In accordance with the provisions of this statute, I hearby request permission to mail the publication named in Item 1 at the reduced postage rates presently authorized by 39 U.S.C. 3626.

(signed) Ed Shukin — Business Manager

DON'T MISS *NEXT* ISSUE!

ALAN ZELENETZ & RUDY NEBRES!

"DEVIL OF DARFAR!"

KING CONAN #18 ON SALE IN MAY!